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INEQUALITY OF LANDHOLDING IN NEPAL: SOME POLICY ISSUES

Shyam Thapa
Devendra Chhetry

Introduction

Nepal has overwhelmingly an agrarian economy. As of 1991, 81% of the total economically active population in the country was engaged in the agriculture sector (CBSa, 1995). In the fiscal year 1974/75 the agriculture sector in Nepal contributed 72% to the total national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Eighteen years later in 1992/93, its percentage share constituted 45.6% (MOF, 1995). Thus, although there has been over the years a substantial decline in the share of the agriculture in the GDP, agriculture still commands a significant share of the economic activities in Nepal. In view of these factors, improvement in agriculture has continued to be a priority in the country's national development plans.

One of the policy issues aimed at improving the agriculture sector concerns the concentration of landholding. It is often argued that a high degree of concentration of land deters the productivity and the potential for improvement, since it tends to marginalize the interest of a large proportion of the farmers. It is, therefore, argued that better distribution of land is essential in increasing agricultural productivity and improving the overall agricultural sector. To the extent that equity in land distribution is a major policy intervention, it is imperative to assess the situation of land concentration in the country.

This paper analyzes the pattern of land concentration in the 75 districts of Nepal. Second, we examine the factors associated with the variation in land concentration. Finally, we analyze the relationship between land concentration and agricultural production and draw policy implications of the findings.

Data and Methods

The data used in the analysis refer to the year around 1991. The data used to estimate land concentration are from the agricultural census (CBS, 1993b). The agricultural census collected data on the size of the landholding and the number of landholders.

Land concentration is measured by Gini Ratio or Gini index. Gini index has long (since 1905) been used to measure inequalities in the distribution of wealth or income (Lorenz, 1905). Gini index is a summary measure of inequality; the value of the index ranges between 0 and 1. A value closer to 0 indicates minimum inequality of the distribution of wealth and a value closer to 1 indicates the existence of severe inequalities. In our analysis, Gini index shows the distribution of operational land area compared with the distribution of number of holdings (or holders). Hence, if the land were equally distributed among the number of holders, there would be no inequality.

Agricultural production data are taken from the agricultural statistics (NPCS, 1994). In our analysis, agriculture production includes eight items: paddy, maize, millet, wheat, barley, oil seed, potato, and sugarcane. These items represent 87% of all the agricultural products nationally.

The data of the eight production items are converted into a standard measure of output, per capita calories per annum, by using the recommended calorie conversion factors (MOA, 1994). The population data from the 1991 census (CBS, 1993c) are used to compute per capita values.

The following ten variables are used as indicators of the socioeconomic development of the districts: (1) topography, (2) road, (3) non-agricultural population, (4) literacy, (5) urbanization, (6) resource access, (7) household modernity, (8) infant mortality, (9) cultivated land, and (10) land tenure.

Topography refers to the percentage of land in each district with greater than 30 degree slope (Subedi, 1995). *Road* refers to the length of road (black-topped, graveled or earthen) in kilometers per 1,000 hectare of land area (Ministry of Works and Transport, 1991).

Non-agricultural population refers to the percentage of economically active population 10 years and older engaged in the non-agricultural sector (CBS, 1993e). *Literacy* refers to the percentage of people six years and older who can read, write and count (CBS, 1993f). *Urbanization* refers to percent of population that lives in nationally defined urban areas (CBS, 1994). *Resource access* refers to the total bank deposits and credits in each district, as reported by the commercial banks as of mid-1991 (Nepal Rastra Bank, nd). *Household modernity* refers to percentage of households who own a bicycle, as reported in the 1991/92 survey (Ministry of Health, 1993).

Public health services utilization refers to percentage of currently married women in reproductive age group (15-49) who have used various maternal and child health services. The services include the following: live births in the five years preceding the survey whose mothers received at least one tetanus toxoid injection (TTI); children among those aged 12-59 months who have received *Bacille Calmette Guerin* (BCG) vaccine; children among those aged 12-59 who have received three doses of *Diphtheria Pertussis Tetanus* (DPT) vaccine; children among those aged 12-59 months who have received three doses of the polio vaccine; children among those 12-59 months who have received the measles vaccine; children under 5 years of age with diarrhea in the two weeks preceding the survey who were given oral rehydration therapy (ORT), either purchased or home-prepared solution; currently married women, with a birth in the five years preceding the survey, who received antenatal care from a doctor, trained nurse/midwife or traditional birth attendant; and women of reproductive age, 15-49, who are currently-in-union and are using contraception to space or limit pregnancies. These data are calculated from a 1991/92 national survey and described in detail elsewhere (Thapa, 1996).

Infant mortality refers to the average number of deaths under one year of age per 1,000 live births during a specific year. The rates are based on the application of an indirect technique to the 1991 census data (Thapa, 1996). *Cultivated land* refers to the amount (in hectares) of cultivated land including, arable land and land under permanent crops (CBS, 1993b). *Land tenure* refers to the percentage of total number of landholding self owned, not rented to or from others (CBS, 1993b).

Results

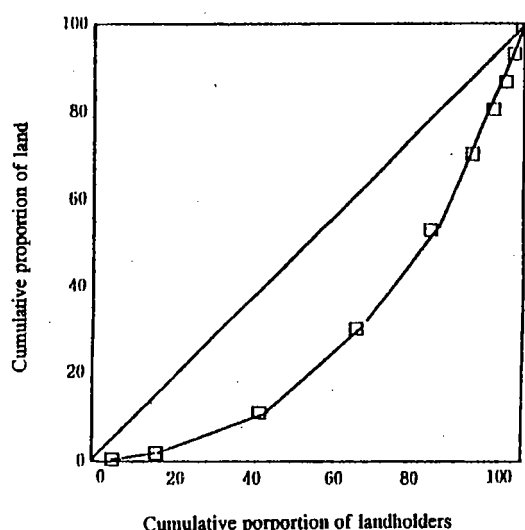
Table 1 shows the concentration of land, measured by Gini index, in the 75 districts. The table also shows the ranking of the districts, from relatively better to worse situation.

Land concentration ranges from a low of 0.329 in Mugu district to a high of 0.674 in Parbat district. Thus there is a difference of 0.345 among the districts, with the national average of 0.518. Figure 1 shows Lorenz Curve for all Nepal, which shows the pattern of distribution of operational land and number of holders. Gini index refers to the proportion of the total area under the diagonal that lies in the area between the diagonal and the Lorenz curve.

Table 1. Inequality of landholding (as measured by Gini Index) and Gini Rank of 75 districts, Nepal, 1991

District	Gini Index	Gini Rank	District	Gini Index	Gini Rank
Mugu	0.329	1	Udayapur	0.442	39
Humla	0.354	2	Sindhupalchowk	0.443	40
Rukum	0.363	3	Lamjung	0.444	41
Dhading	0.364	4	Manang	0.445	42
Bhaktapur	0.365	5	Solokhumbu	0.447	43
Dolkha	0.366	6	Dailekh	0.449	44
Kalikot	0.373	7	Dhankuta	0.450	45
Nuwakot	0.376	8	Kaski	0.451	46
Jumla	0.377	9	Gulmi	0.454	47
Palpa	0.378	10	Pyuthan	0.463	48
Syanja	0.385	11	Rasuwa	0.464	49
Bajhang	0.387	12	Taplejung	0.467	50
Salyan	0.388	13	Bajura	0.468	51
Dadeldhura	0.390	14	Ilam	0.469	52
Myagdi	0.392	15	Rupandehi	0.470	53
Jajarkot	0.394	16	Banke	0.472	54
Gorkha	0.395	17	Chitawan	0.492	55
Achham	0.400	18	Dang	0.505	56
Makwanpur	0.401	19	Khotang	0.506	57
Bhojpur	0.403	20	Panchthar	0.510	58
Doti	0.408	21	Bardiya	0.515	59
Sankhuwasabha	0.410	22	Kapilbastu	0.517	60
Kavrepalanchowk	0.412	23	Saptari	0.529	61
Surkhet	0.413	24	Nawalparasi	0.532	62
Tanahu	0.416	25	Rautahat	0.533	63
Baitadi	0.419	26	Bara	0.537	64
Dolpa	0.421	27	Kailali	0.538	65
Sindhuli	0.422	28	Siraha	0.539	66
Lalitpur	0.423	29	Sunsari	0.541	67
Arghakhanchi	0.424	30	Mahotari	0.542	68
Kathmandu	0.425	31	Sarlahi	0.543	69
Rolpa	0.428	32	Morang	0.544	70
Okhaldhunga	0.430	33	Jhapa	0.551	71
Baglung	0.434	34	Terhathum	0.558	72
Ramechhap	0.435	35	Dhanusha	0.560	73
Mustang	0.436	36	Parsa	0.592	74
Kanchanpur	0.438	37	Parbat	0.674	75
Darchula	0.441	38	All Nepal	0.518	na

Source: Calculated by the authors based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 1993b). na = not applicable.

Figure 1. Inequality of landholding, Nepal, 1991

In 18 districts, the values range between 0.329 and up to 0.40. These districts have relatively better land distribution situation. That is, these districts have a better balance between the distribution of cultivated land and the number of landholders. In the next 37 districts, the values range between 0.40 and up to 0.50. Compared to the first group of 18 districts, these 37 districts have a relatively worse land concentration situation. An additional 20 districts have the Gini index of over 0.50. These districts have the worst land distribution situation compared to all the other districts. One district (Parbat) has an index value of 0.67, the most unequal distribution of land in the country.

What then accounts for the variations in land distribution? Or what explains better or worse land distribution patterns in the country? In Table 2 we present linear correlation coefficients (r) between concentration of landholding (Gini index) and several socioeconomic and ecological variables for the 75 districts. (In the analysis, Parbat district is excluded because of a statistical anomaly, that is, high standardized residual.) Several interesting results emerge from the data.

First, inequality in landholding in the districts is positively associated with selected indicators of the development level of the districts. The better the geographical topography of a district, the more unequal is the landholding pattern. Districts with higher percentage of non-agricultural population have higher inequality of the distribution land. Similarly, districts with higher percentage of households with modernity asset have higher level of inequality. Infant mortality is lower in districts with higher inequality of landholding. Second, certain development indicators such as

road, literacy and urbanization do not have any significant association with landholding inequality.

Table 2. Correlation of inequality of landholding (Gini Index) with selected indicators of development, 74 districts, Nepal, 1991

Indicator (Variable)	Correlation with Gini Index
Topography	0.612**
Road	0.049
Non-agricultural population	0.390**
Literacy	0.042
Urbanization	0.119
Household modernity	0.585**
Infant mortality	-0.367**
Land ownership	0.513**
Cultivated land	0.729**

** $p < .001$

Note: For definition of the variables, see text. Parbat district is excluded because of high standardized residuals.

Third, the results in the table further suggest that among the variables examined the most important determinant of the inequality of landholding is the amount of cultivated land ($r=0.729$; $p<.001$). The holding is more unequally distributed in the districts that have larger amount of cultivated land available. Conversely, the land distribution is more even in those districts that have smaller amount of total cultivated land. This implies that in the districts with more unequal distribution of land, the average size of landholding are larger than in the districts with more unequal distribution of land. This is confirmed by the correlation of 0.740 ($p<.001$) between average size of the landholding and Gini index. Further, the correlation between the median size of landholding and Gini index in the districts is 0.555 ($p<.001$) and the range in landholding median size is from a low of 0.21 (in Achham district) to a high of 1.24 hectares (in Bardiya district). The size of landholding even among the 95 percentile of landholders ranges from a low of 0.86 hectare (in Achham district) to a high of 5.83 hectares (in Kapilvastu district).

The results challenge the notion that better equity in land distribution will necessarily lead to the improvements in agricultural sector in Nepal. The

results further raise question as to whether a better distribution of land is a desirable policy intervention to bring about the desired improvements.

We also carried out multivariate regression analysis to test the independent effect of the statistically significant explanatory variables (as shown in Table 2). Some of the explanatory variables are, however, strongly correlated ($r > 0.65$) with one another. Strong correlation exists between topography and cultivated land, topography and household modernity asset, road and non-agricultural population, road and urbanization, non-agricultural population and urbanization, and household modernity asset and cultivated land (Table 3).

To avoid the problem of multicollinearity, we estimated five separate regression equations by including the variable, cultivated land, and each of the significant variables in each equations. The results are presented in Table 4. The effect on land inequality of the other variables (viz, topography, non-agricultural population, household modernity, and infant mortality) is statistically insignificant once the variable, cultivated land, is introduced in the equation. Ownership of land and the availability of the amount of cultivated land have independent effects on land concentration. The two factors explain 58% of the total variation in land inequality. Furthermore, of the two variables, land availability assumes the principle role in determining factor of the inequality of the distribution of land in Nepal.

The question of better equity in land distribution is important from the ultimate point of view of productivity. Does better equity in land necessarily mean higher productivity? To examine this, we first did a bivariate regression analysis between the Gini index and annual agricultural production in per capita calories based on the district-level data (excluding Bara and Parbat districts due to high standardized residuals). The scatter-plots are shown in Figure 2. The correlation coefficient between land inequality and production is 0.523 ($p < .001$). This means that production is higher in districts that have higher inequality of landholding.

We further carried out a structural model by using the path analysis (Hanushek and Jackson, 1977) in which agricultural production is a function of land inequality, land ownership and cultivated land. Land inequality is considered an intervening variable. The results are presented in Figure 3.

The variables land ownership and cultivated land do not have a significant *direct effect* on agricultural production. The effects of the two antecedent factors on agricultural production are *indirect*, that is, primarily through land inequality. The *indirect effect* of cultivated land is .271 (or $.619 \times .438$) and the *direct effect* is .124 (or $.619 \times .200$). Thus, the *total effect* is .395. Over two-thirds (68.6%) of the effect of cultivated land on agricultural production operates through land inequality.

Table 3

Table 3. Simple correlation (r) between the explanatory variables, 74 districts, Nepal, 1991

Variable	Topog- raphy	Road	Non- agricu- ltural popul- ation	Literacy	Urban- ization	Household modernity	Infant mortality	Land ownership	Cultivate- d land
Topography	1.000								
Road	.483**	1.000							
Non-agricultural population	.526**	.735**	1.000						
Literacy	.167	.514**	.496**	1.000					
Urbanization	.434**	.806**	.830**	.549**	1.000				
Household modernity	.753**	.405**	.665**	.154**	.563**	1.000			
Infant mortality	.451**	-.345*	-.464**	-.501*	-.362**	-.328**	1.000		
Land ownership	.577**	-.601**	-.564**	-.282*	-.463**	-.411**	.272**	1.000	
Cultivated land	.747**	.111	.339*	.019	.146	.660	-.368**	-.280*	1.000

* p<.01; ** p<.001

Note: Parbat district is excluded because of high standardized residuals.

Table 4. Linear regression results of the effects of cultivated land and other variables on landholding inequality (Gini Index): 74 districts, Nepal, 1991

Equation and independent variables	Beta Coefficient	R ² (%)	F-ratio
Equation One			
Topography	.152		
Cultivated land	.615**		
		52.84	41.90**
Equation Two			
Non-agricultural population	.162		
Cultivated land	.674**		
		54.17	44.14**
Equation Three			
Household modernity	.184		
Cultivated land	.607**		
		53.76	43.44**
Equation Four			
Infant mortality	-.114		
Cultivated land	.687**		
		52.96	42.09**
Equation Five			
Land ownership	-.280**		
Cultivated land	.619**		
		58.03	50.77**

**p<.001

Note: For equations one to four, Parbat district is excluded because of high standardized residuals. Equation five is based on data from 73 districts. Parbat and Bhaktapur districts are excluded because of high standardized residuals.

Similarly, the indirect effect of land ownership on agricultural production through land inequality is $-.123$ (or $.438 \times -.280$) and the direct effect is only $-.036$ (or $-.280 \times .127$). The total effect is $-.159$. More than three-fourths (77.4%) of the effect of land ownership operates through land inequality.

The results presented in Figure 3 also indicates that only 29.9% of the total variation in agricultural production is accounted for by the three variables considered in the model; and about 70% of the variance remains unexplained. At the same time however, the two antecedent factors (land ownership and cultivated land) explain 58% of the total variance in landholding inequality.

Overall, the results imply that one main reason for low agricultural productivity is smaller size of the landholding. Clearly, better distribution of land does not necessarily mean higher productivity.

Figure 2. Relationship between concentration of land-holding (Gini ratio) and agricultural production (per capita calories per annum): 73 districts, Nepal, 1991

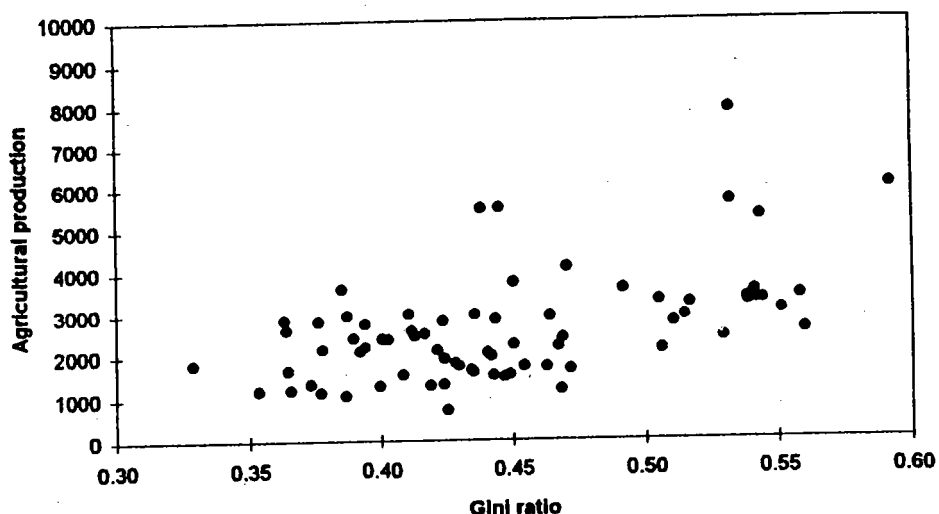
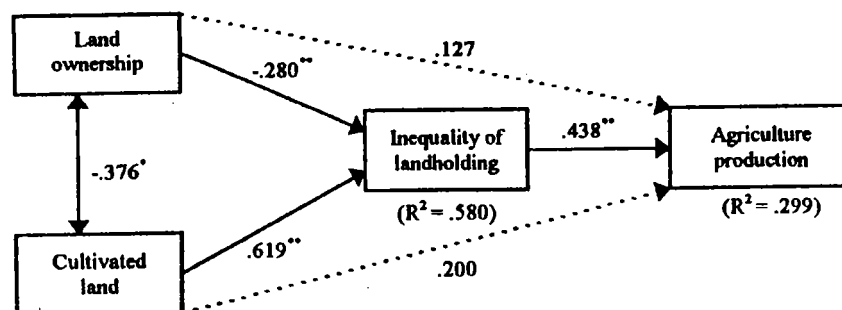


Figure 3. Determinants of inequality of landholding and agricultural productivity in 73 districts of Nepal: A reduced-form model based on the Path analysis



* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$

Note: Dotted line indicates that the relationship is not significant at $p < .05$.

Conclusion

In Nepal, more equal distribution of land exists in less developed and topographically rugged districts. Conversely, more unequal distribution of land exists in socioeconomically and topographically better off districts.

The main factor accounting for the variations in inequality in landholding is the amount of cultivated land. In the least developed and topographically rugged districts such as Mugu and Humla, there is a better distribution of landholding, but the amount of land per holder is considerably less than in other better off districts.

To the extent that increasing agricultural productivity is the ultimate goal, the better distribution of land is associated with less productivity in the districts. Agricultural productivity is significantly higher in districts that have larger amount of cultivated land.

In Nepal, better distribution of landholding appears, therefore, to be an *indicator of poverty*. The worse off the districts are, the better the land distribution and vice-versa. This implies that poverty alleviation can not be brought about by a better distribution of the cultivated land. More fragmentation of land is not the route to poverty alleviation. Such a policy prescription will only worsen the overall agriculture productivity and consequently aggravate poverty in Nepal.

The analysis of the district-level data clearly show that efforts to bring about better equity in the distribution of land will not lead to the improvements in the agricultural sector in Nepal. If new land, especially in the most impoverished districts could be brought into cultivation, the amount of production could increase. It will, however, be a difficult proposition, since there is already a scarce supply of cultivable land in such districts (Chhetry, 1995). Instead, other types of policy interventions are warranted. They may include, increases in off farm employment, increase in production through improved technologies (e.g., intensive farming practices), expansion of irrigation facilities, higher use of fertilizers, and expansion of high-value crops. These policy interventions have been examined in detail in a recently completed long-term agricultural perspective plan (APROSC and JMA, 1995). Policies and programs need to focus on those aspects.

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LINGUISTIC DEMOGRAPHY OF NEPAL

Harka Gurung

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is on demographic aspects rather than linguistics. However, it seems relevant to commence with semantics of some Nepali terms relating to language. The first refers to the variation between *bhāshā* in written form and *kurā* (as *boli* in Hindi) in colloquial speech for language or dialect. The second is the difference in pronunciation whereby *bhāshā* means language or dialect while its vernacular form *bhākhā* means tune or tone. Thirdly, Nepalese languages remain unclassified as to their status as language or dialect despite the use of such terms as *bhasha* for the former and *bhāshikā* for the latter. The various population censuses use the neutral term mother tongue. Normally, 'mother tongue' means one's native language, 'language' is the speech of particular community or country, and 'dialect' is a form of speech peculiar to a particular region. Drawing distinction between language and dialect is difficult for its tendency to be subjective and political. Thus, the report of the National-language Policy Advisory Committee remains non-committal by relying heavily on 36 languages reported in the census as well as making cursory references, to 70 languages/dialects reported by researchers.¹

a. Inventory

A basic problem with regard to languages and dialects of Nepal is as to their extant number. The population census of 1952/54, the first to report mother tongue data, listed 53 languages/dialects.² This census report also listed six native³ and ten foreign languages⁴ that were excluded in later censuses. If one regroups the reported tarai rural dialects as 'eastern', 'central-east' and 'far east' under Maithili, as 'central-west tarai' under Bhojpuri, and of 'far west tarai' under Awadhi (Table 2), the total number of mother tongues comes to 48. These represent four language families: 24 Indo-Aryan, 20 Tibeto-Burman, 2 Munda⁵ and 2 Dravidian.⁶

A later update on the state of Nepalese languages provides a list of 52 languages.⁷ This inventory includes 36 Tibeto-Burman, 14 Indo-Aryan, one each Munda and Dravidian languages. The list somehow excludes Bengali and Kumhale and instead adds 18 minor ones, all from Tibeto-Burman group except Churaute. The inclusion of languages such as Dolpali, Lhomi, Surel, Manangba and Nishangba, related to place-names, are derived from anthropological sources. The report of the National-language Policy Advisory Committee (RNSA) enumerates 36 languages based on the censuses.⁸ These are classified as 19 Tibeto-Burman, 15 Indo-Aryan, one Munda and one Dravidian.

One useful inventory of unwritten languages and dialects of heterogeneous ethnic minorities has been attempted by Hansson.⁹ These are discussed by geographic areas in groups of related language as follows:

- a. Magar: (1) Chhantel-Magar, (2) Kaike, (3) Kham, (4) Kusunda, (5) Raji*, (6) Raute
- b. Bhotia: (1) Bhote, (2) Byansi*
- c. Gurung-Tamang: (1) Chhantel-Thakali, (2) Nishang, (3) Shege (Baragaon), (4) Thakali*
- d. Newari: (1) Dolkhali, (2) Pahari*
- e. Chepang-Thami: (1) Bhujel (Chepang), (2) Bramu (Thami)
- f. Danuwar: (1) Bote-Majhi*, (2) Darai*, (3) Kachhare, (4) Kuswar, (5) Rai-Danuwar.

Of the above 21 languages/dialects belonging to six groups, the censuses identify only six (*).

Hansson also provides a classification of Kiranti languages based on the Linguistic Survey of Nepal.¹⁰ Table 2 attempts a schematic presentation of their three groups (Roman numeral) and 14 sub-groups (small case letter). Thus, the western group (Wallo Kirant) has 13, central group (Majh Kirant) 12, and eastern group (Pallo Kirant) 13 languages/dialects, extinct or extant. Of the total 38, only Hayu, Limbu, Sunwar are separately listed in the censuses while others are subsumed under Rai-Kiranti. Inclusion of Hansson's additional languages/dialects of 35 from Kiranti group and 15 from other ethnic minorities above yields a total of 107 languages/dialects for the country. In other words, one might safely assume the existence of over a hundred languages/dialects in Nepal.

Table 1: Classification of Kiranti Languages

I. WESTERN	II. CENTRAL	III. EASTERN
a. Northern Marginal 1. Khaling 2. Durni 3. Koi-Koyu 4. Hamphe	a. North-West 1. Sangpang 2. Kulung 3. Nachering	a. North-West 1. N. Lohorung 2. S. Lohorung 3. Yamphu
b. Western 1. Bahing 2. Sunwar*	b. Northern Intermediate 1. Chukwa/Pohing	b. Eastern 1. Limbu* 2. Chhathare Limbu
c. Eastern 1. Thulung 2. Linkhim	c. North-East 1. Mewahang (W&E) 2. Saam (W&E)	c. South Western 1. Athapahariya 2. Belhariya 3. Chhiling (Chhuylung, Chhintang, Baybansi, Chongkha, Longabal 4. Mugali 5. Phangduwali 6. Lumba-Yakkha 7. Yakkha
d. Western Marginal 1. Hayu/Wayu*	d. Marginal 1. Dungmali 2. Waling 3. Khandung	
e. Southern 1. Umbule 2. Jerung	e. Southern 1. Bantawa 2. Puma 3. Chamling	
f. Marginal Halesi 1. Tilung 2. Choksule 3. Dorungkecha		

*Reported in censuses

Source: Hansson, 1991, Appendix A.

b. Data Problem

Population censuses form the main source for linguistic data on Nepal. However, there are some problems related to their number, classification and distribution. The 1952/54 census report gives a total population of 8,235,079 in its mother tongue tables.¹¹ However, the totals come to 8,237,539 for Table 9 and 8,232,075 for Table 10. The actual total based on regional distribution of mother tongue population comes to 8,238,339 (Appendix A). More problematic is the classification of tarai languages in

the 1952/54 census. This has implication on the magnitude of population change by languages over time. The numbers attributed to Awadhi, Bhojpuri, and Maithili are indeed on the low side, divested of those reporting five tarai regional languages/dialects. One needs to consider here a dialect continuum or languages shading into each other, so that there is a certain arbitrariness about their division into discrete categories. However, Table 2 below is an attempt at their regrouping.

Table 2: Reclassification of Major Tarai Languages, 1962/54

Language Reported	No.	Related Mother Tongue	No.	Total
1. Awadhi	27	(a) Far-west rural	69,446	69,473
2. Bhojpuri	16,335	(b) Central-west Rural	258,135	275,470
		(c) Easter rural	460,946	
3. Maithili	300,768	(d) Central-east rural	617,443	1,485,726
		(e) Far-east rural	106,569	
Total	317,130		1,512,539	1,829,669

The reclassification is only approximate since central-west region of 1952/54 census had numerous Awadhi and eastern tarai many Bhojpuri speakers.¹² The adjustment, however general, yields a significant volume in the population of the three major regional languages of the tarai.

The 1991 census data on mother tongue also have some problems. There is considerable increase in those reporting 'other local languages' which rank first in Baitadi, and second in six western mountain and hill districts. They are also reported in sizable number in the three tarai districts east of Kosi river and Kailali. Moreover, Baitadi and Doti are primarily Nepali-speaking districts but those reporting local languages constitute 93.1 percent of the former's and 45.2 percent of the latter's population.¹³ There is also widespread reporting of some mother tongues far from their native area such as Bhojpuri and Maithili in the mountain, Limbu, Rai-Kiranti, Rajbansi and Satar in western.hill, and Byansi and Thakali in eastern tarai. Such discrepancy is particularly evident in the case of Rai-Kiranti, whose number ranks second in eight highland districts mostly west of Kali-Gandaki river and ranks third in Gulmi and Palpa.

Of the 60 ethnic/caste groups listed in the census, 23 have their own mother tongue. A cross-tabulation of ethnic/caste and related language data

by district shows many cases where the population reporting mother tongue far exceeds the ethnic/caste population.¹⁴ Such occurrences are noted in 48 districts for Rai-Kiranti, 44 for Rajbansi, 33 for Bengali, 26 for Raji, and 25 for Thakali. In these districts, the mother tongue population in excess of ethnic/caste population is 675 percent for Rai-Kiranti, 125 percent for Tharu, 380 percent for Bengali and 126 percent for Rajbansi. Other 13 social groups also report larger population by mother tongue than ethnicity/caste. Thus, the 17 groups in reported districts total 186,895 by ethnicity/caste and 296,823 by mother tongue population. Mother tongue population exceeding ethnic/caste population by 58.8 percent cannot be accounted for adoption of second language alone since many of these are languages of the minority groups. The explanation must be sought in the open-ended nature of questionnaire in the census schedule and errors in reporting as well as tabulation. Since there is no way of verifying the extent of discrepancy, the foregoing analysis is based on the reported census data.

TEMPORAL CHANGE (1952/54-1991)

The 1952/54 census data have been used as the base-line to measure the change in population size by mother tongue over time. For purposes of comparison, the languages listed in 1952/54 census have been aligned to that reported in 1991 census, bringing the total to 30. These have been grouped into four language families and two geographic areas. The language families are Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Munda and Dravidian. The first two families have both highland and lowland categories. The analysis is done at two levels: macro by language family groups and micro for individual languages/dialects.

a. By Groups

Of the total population of 8.2 million in 1952/54, 70.6 percent had a mother tongue belonging to the highland group (Table 3). This group includes two Indo-Aryan and 14 Tibeto-Burman languages (Appendix A). The latter made-up 21.8 percent of the total population whereas Indo-Aryan Nepali alone was 48.7 percent. The lowland language group had a population share of 29.1 percent. Of the four language families represented in the tarai, 12 Indo-Aryan languages had a share of 28.7 percent. The two Tibeto-Burman and one each of Munda and Dravidian families were very

small in number. Their total share was only slightly above that of other local and foreign languages, and unstated.

**Table 3: Population Change by Language Groups,
1952/54-1991**

Language	1952/54		1991		Increase 1952/54-91	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A. Highland Group	5,816,934	70.6	12,434,219	67.2	6,617,285	113.8
1. Indo-Aryan	4,019,296	48.8	9,314,202	50.4	5,294,906	131.7
2. Tibeto-Burman	1,797,908	21.8	3,120,017	16.9	1,322,109	73.5
B. Lowland Group	2,396,938	29.1	5,540,766	30.0	3,143,828	131.2
1. Indo-Aryan	2,367,683	28.7	5,474,286	29.6	3,106,603	131.2
2. Tibeto-Burman	7,185	0.1	17,973	0.1	10,788	150.1
3. Munda	17,258	0.2	33,332	0.2	16,074	93.1
4. Dravidian	4,812	0.1	15,175	0.1	10,363	215.4
C. Others/Unstated	24,197	0.3	516,112	2.8	491,915	2,033.0
TOTAL	8,238,069	100.0	18,491,097	100.0	10,252,758	124.5
i. Indo-Aryan	6,386,979	77.5	14,788,488	80.0	8,401,509	131.5
ii. Tibeto-Burman	1,805,093	21.9	3,137,990	17.0	1,332,897	73.8

Source: Appendix C.

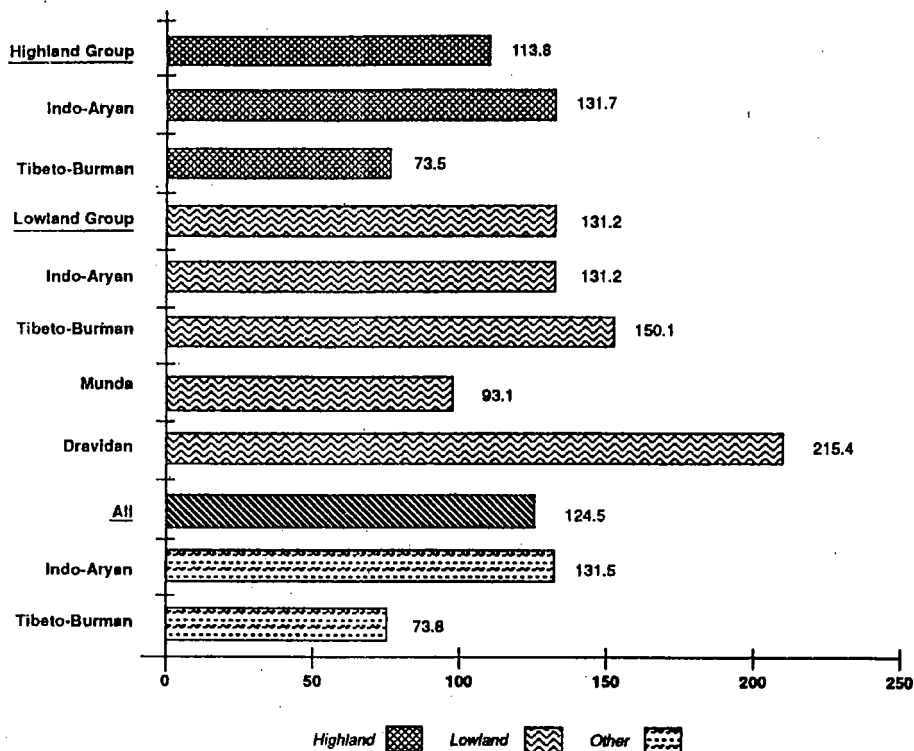
In 1991, the total population of Nepal was 18.5 million, an increase of 124.5 percent since 1952/54 (Table 3). The 14 Indo-Aryan language population increased by 131.5 percent. The increase for the 14 Tibeto-Burman language group was 73.8 percent (Fig.1). The share of the highland language group declined from 70.6 to 67.2 percent despite a population increase of 113.8 percent. The Indo-Aryan share increased from 77.5 to 80.0 percent, while the Tibeto-Burman share declined from 21.9 to 17.0 percent. The population gain of highland language families was lower than the national average of 124.5 percent.

The share of lowland language group increased only slightly, although population increase was higher than the national average. Population gain was much higher for Dravidian and Tibeto-Burman language families but their share remained the same. The only lowland group to gain in language share was the Indo-Aryan family. The share of others/unstated category increased from 0.3 percent in 1952/54 to 2.8 percent in 1991.

b. By Languages

Of the 30 languages for which comparable data both for 1952-54 and 1991 are available, a dozen record population increase exceeding the national average (Appendix C). These include nine Indo-Aryan, two Tibeto-Burman and one Dravidian language. Except Nepali and Thakali, these belong to the lowland group. The most significant increases, over three-fold, were recorded for Urdu, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Marwari, and Jhangar, all tarai languages (Fig.2).

**Fig. 1: Population Increase by Language Group
1952/54-1991
(In Percent)**



Source: Table 4

Among the nine languages that more than doubled, seven are of Indo-Aryan family and two Tibeto-Burman. Among these, five are tarai (Bengali, Tharu, Dhimal, Rajbansi, Hindi), two inner tarai (Danuwar, Darai), one hill (Nepali) and one mountain (Thakali) languages. Seven languages record a population increase of 75.9 to 97.6 percent or over three-quarter. These include five Tibeto-Burman, one Indo-Aryan and one Munda

language. By native area, six of these are hill (Majhi, Raji, Rai-Kiranti, Tamang, Newari, Chepang) and one tarai (Satar) language.

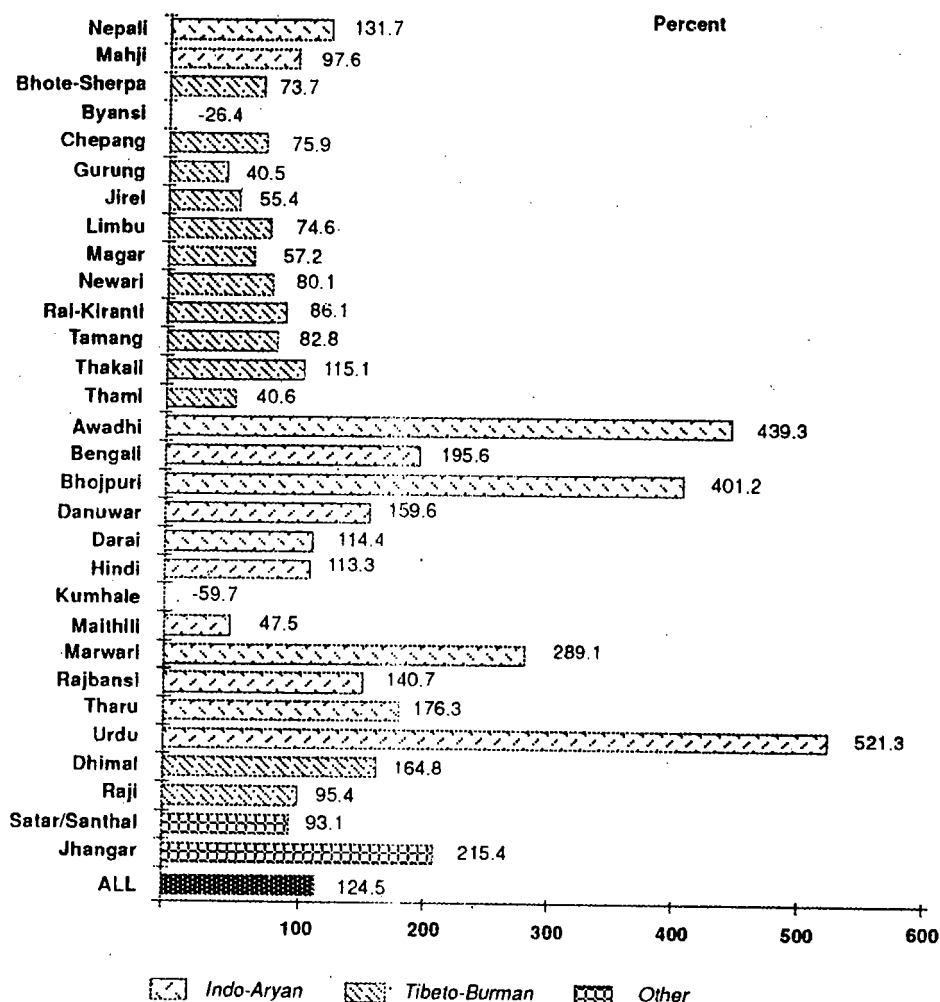
Then follow seven languages whose population increase range from 40.5 to 74.6 percent. Six of these belong to the Tibeto-Burman family. Maithili is the sole Indo-Aryan representative in this cohort, and its low increase may partly be due to the problem of classification in 1952/54 census. In terms of native area, these languages with low population increase include five hill (Limbu, Magar, Jirel, Thami, Gurung), one mountain (Bhote-Sherpa), and one tarai (Maithili) language. Two languages record absolute decline in population during 1952/54-1991. These are Kumhale that declined by 59.7 percent and Byansi by 26.4 percent. Kumhale is an Indo-Aryan language based in inner tarai while Byansi is Tibeto-Burman from the mountain. Ten Tibeto-Burman, five Indo-Aryan, and one Munda recorded increase below the national average. Of the 14 Indo-Aryan languages, nine exceed the average national population increase. Eleven Indo-Aryan, two Tibeto-Burman and one Munda family languages doubled their population in less than four decades.

There have been some changes in ranking of the languages due to differential rates of population growth and language shift. In 1952/54, eleven languages claimed at least one percent of the total population. In 1991, twelve had such population share. Of the top ten in rank in 1952/54, six were Tibeto-Burman and seven of highland origin (Appendix C). In 1991, the top ten included five Indo-Aryan and six of highland origin. Nepali remained dominant in both censuses, followed by Maithili. Bhojpuri replaced Tamang in the third place and Tharu replaced Newari in the fourth place. Bhojpuri and Awadhi had a major shift in ranking, sixth to third for the former and 13th to 9th for the latter. Limbu retained its 10th ranking while Gurung was relegated from 9th to 11th place. Among those ranked in the bottom ten, relegation for Thami (18 to 23), Majhi (21 to 24) and Kumhale (25 to 29) are noteworthy.

SPATIAL SHIFT

Change over time discussed above is one aspect of linguistic demography. Another refers to spatial change or distribution pattern. This may be assessed in terms of sectoral (east-west) and elevational (north-south) changes in population by languages. The former areal division has to do with major watersheds while the latter concerns ecological zones. However, since the areal divisions followed in the censuses of 1952/54 and 1991 are not comparable, some adjustments are necessary.¹⁵

Fig. 2: Population Increase by Language Group, 1952/54-1991



Source: Appendix C

a. Sectoral

Table 4 shows population distribution of language groups by sectors for 1952/54 and 1991. In 1952/54, highland language group population was 55.3 percent in the west, 34 percent in the east and 10.7 percent in central sector (Table 4). Over 80 percent of them were in western and eastern hills. Over two of third of highland Indo-Aryan group were in the west and a fifth in the east. They were only a few in western inner tarai, western and central tarai. Highland Tibeto-Burmans were 34.1 percent in the east, 29.0 percent in the west and a fifth in central sector. They were very few in central and western tarai, and western inner tarai.

Population with lowland or tarai languages were mostly in the east (Table 4). Their share in central and western sectors was 15.7 percent and 13.4 percent respectively. Eastern tarai had an overwhelming share of the lowland languages. It claimed 69.8 percent of Indo-Aryan, 78.9 percent of Tibeto-Burman and most of Munda and Dravidian language groups. The Munda were represented in eastern inner tarai and tarai, and the Dravidian only in eastern tarai.

Table 4: Sectoral Distribution of Language Group, 1952/54 and 1991

Sector Region	Highland Group						Lowland Group							
	Indo-Aryan		Tibeto-Burman		Total		Indo-Aryan		Tibeto-Burman		Munda & Dravidian		Total	
	52/54	1991	52/54	1991	52/54	1991	52/54	1991	52/54	1991	52/54	1991	52/54	1991
A. West	67.0	56.1	29.0	23.1	55.3	47.8	13.5	14.1	21.1	11.6		2.0	13.4	14.0
1. Hill	66.0	47.8	29.0	22.4	54.6	41.4	1.6	0.5	4.6	5.9	1.3	1.5	0.5	
2. Inner Tarai	0.8	2.5	0.0	0.1	0.6	1.9	2.5	2.1		0.2		0.1	2.4	2.1
3. Tarai	0.2	5.7	0.1	0.5	0.2	4.4	9.5	11.6	16.4	5.6		0.6	9.4	11.4
B. Central	6.5	14.7	20.2	28.0	10.7	18.0	15.9	15.5		2.8		1.1	15.7	15.3
4. Kathmandu Valley	4.0	5.6	13.7	17.8	7.0	8.6	0.1	0.4		1.4		0.2	0.1	0.4
5. Inner Tarai	2.3	4.0	6.3	7.4	3.5	4.9	1.5	1.1		0.2		0.2	1.4	1.1
6. Tarai	0.2	5.1	0.1	2.8	0.2	4.5	14.3	14.0		1.2		0.7	14.1	13.8
C. East	26.5	29.3	34.1	48.9	34.0	34.2	70.7	70.4	789.9	85.6	100.0	97.1	71.0	70.6
7. Hill	21.9	15.1	44.9	33.4	29.0	19.7	0.2	0.2		1.3		0.3	0.2	0.3
8. Inner Tarai	2.6	2.7	3.6	4.9	2.9	3.2	0.7	0.7		0.0	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.7
9. Tarai	2.0	11.5	2.3	10.6	2.1	11.3	69.8	69.4	78.9	84.3	99.9	96.7	70.1	69.7
ALL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Appendices A and B.

During the period 1952/54-1991, the total population of 30 languages with comparable data more than doubled (Appendix C). Sectoral share of language groups changed due to the differential increase in population during the 37/39 years interval. Sectoral distribution of population in 1991 by language groups is shown in Table 4. Two language groups recorded a decline at the regional level. One was a 30.4 percent decline of lowland Indo-Aryan group in western hill and another a 15.1 percent decline of lowland Tibeto-Burman, group in western tarai (Appendix D). All other language groups increased in population in other regions. Another notable

feature was the reporting in 1991 of lowland Tibeto-Burman group in central sector, and Munda and Dravidian groups in western and central sectors (Table 4).

Those with largest absolute increase were highland Indo-Aryan in western hill, highland Tibeto-Burman in Kathmandu Valley, and all lowland groups in eastern tarai. In terms of percentage increase, the highest recorded were highland IndoAryan in western tarai, highland Tibeto-Burman in western inner tarai, lowland Indo-Aryan in Kathmandu Valley, lowland Tibeto-Burman in western hill, and Munda and Dravidian in eastern inner tarai (Appendix D).

As a consequence, there was marked change in the sectoral distribution of population of different language groups. The west's share of highland Indo-Aryan speakers declined but the east's increased slightly and the central sector's doubled (Table 4). The percentage of highland Tibeto-Burman speakers also declined in the west but increased in central and eastern sectors. The proportion of lowland Indo-Aryan speakers declined in central and eastern sectors while that of lowland Tibeto-Burman group declined in the west. Central and western sectors gained in Munda and Dravidian speakers where there were none in 1952/54.

Overall, the 30 comparable languages had a population increase of 118.8 percent during 1952/54-1991. The highest absolute increase was in eastern sector but the highest percent increase was in central sector. Population share by linguistic groups was higher in the west for the highland group and the reverse for the lowland group. However, there was variation between censuses as to their respective share within each sector.² In the west, the highland group's share declined and that of the lowland group increased. In central sector, the highland group gained and the lowland group lost. In the east, there was marginal gain for highland group and marginal loss for lowland group.

b. Elevational

In 1952/54, the 8.2 million population of Nepal was distributed as 64.7 percent in the hill, 29.0 percent in the tarai, and 6.3 percent in inner tarai (Table 5). Over ninety percent of highland language group was in the hill. Similarly, 93.7 percent of lowland language group was concentrated in the tarai. Conversely, only 1.8 percent of the lowland group was in the lowland and 2.4 percent of the highland group in the tarai. Among the highland group, 91.9 percent of IndoAryan and 87.6 percent of Tibeto-Burman were reported in the hill. Their share in the tarai was only 2.4 percent and 2.5 percent respectively. Similarly, the lowland group of Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman were mostly in the tarai: 93.6 percent former and

95.4 percent latter. Munda and Dravidian speakers were confined to the tarai, mainly in eastern tarai.

Table 5: Regional Population by Language Group, 1952154 & 1991

Region	Highland Group						Lowland Group						Others/ Unstated		TOTAL	
	Indo-Aryan		Tibeto- Burman		Highland Total		Indo-Aryan		Tibeto- Burman		Munda		Dravidian		Lowland Total	
	52/54	1991	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91
	52/54	1991	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91	52/54	91
A. Mountain/Hill	91.9	68.5	87.6	73.6	90.6	69.7	1.8	1.1	4.6	8.5		2.6	0.2	1.8	1.2	77.7
1. West/Central	66.0	47.8	29.0	22.4	54.6	41.4	1.6	0.5	4.6	5.9		1.9	0.1	1.5	0.5	0.2
2. Kathmandu Valley	4.0	5.6	13.7	17.8	7.0	8.6	0.1	0.4		1.4	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.4	1.6	1.6
3. East	21.9	1.1	44.9	33.4	29.0	19.7	0.1	0.2		1.3	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.3	75.9
B. Inner Tarai	5.7	9.2	9.9	12.4	7.0	10.0	4.5	3.9		0.4	0.0	0.4	0.1	4.5	3.9	10.8
4. West	0.8	2.5	0.0	0.1	0.6	1.9	2.4	2.1		0.2		0.1		2.4	2.1	
5. Central	2.3	4.0	6.3	7.4	3.5	4.9	1.5	1.1		0.2		0.2	0.1	2.4	1.1	5.3
6. East	2.6	2.7	3.6	4.9	2.9	3.2	0.7	0.7		0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.7	0.7	5.4
C. Tarai	2.4	22.3	2.5	14.0	2.4	20.2	93.6	94.9	95.4	91.1	100.0	97.0	100.0	99.7	93.7	95.0
7. West	0.2	5.7	0.1	0.5	0.2	4.4	9.5	11.6	16.4	5.6		0.8	0.0	9.4	11.4	0.1
8. Central	0.2	5.1	0.1	2.8	0.2	4.5	14.3	14.0		1.2		0.9	0.0	14.1	33.8	1.2
9. East	2.0	11.5	2.3	10.6	2.0	11.3	69.8	69.4	78.9	84.3	100.0	95.3	100.0	99.7	70.1	69.7
ALL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

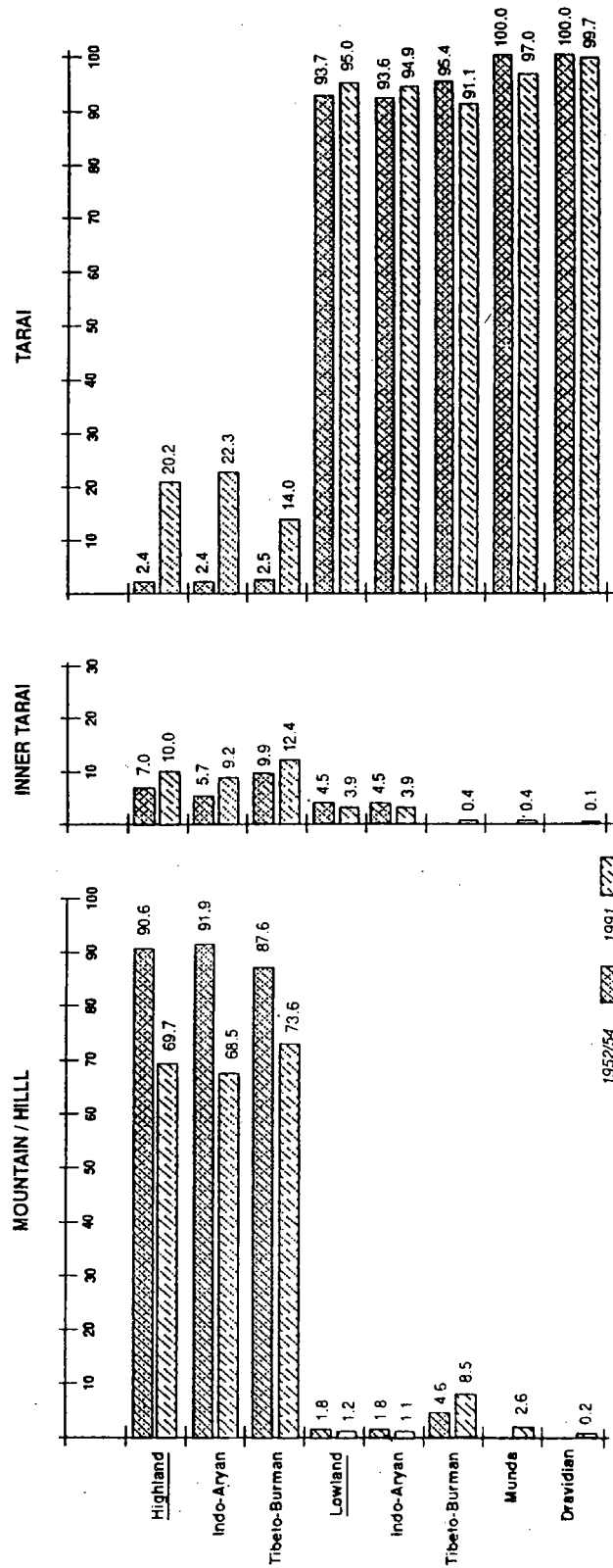
Source: Appendices B & I.

The census of 1991 shows considerable shift in population by elevation zones with consequent change in linguistic share. The most significant was the large increase of highland language group in the lowlands. Highland Indo-Aryan speakers increased by 2.7 million or 72.6 percent in the mountain/hill (Appendix E). They increased by 2.6 million in the lowlands which was 2.8 times in inner tarai and 20.8 times in tarai since 1952/54. Increase of highland Tibeto-Burman speakers was similarly progressively higher at lower elevations: 45.8 percent in mountain/hill, 117.0 percent in inner tarai and 878.5 percent in the tarai.

Highland language group increased 17-fold in the tarai with addition of 2.4 million of their population since 1952/54. The lowland Indo-Aryan group increased by nearly 3 million in the tarai compared to less than 20,000 in the highlands. The tarai language groups had a divergent pattern in percent increase. It was highest in the tarai for Indo-Aryan, in highlands for Tibeto-Burman, and in inner tarai for Munda and Dravidian. Overall, the lowland language group increased by 50.1 percent in the highlands, 98.8 percent in inner tarai, and 134.3 percent in the tarai.

In 1991, nearly 70 percent of highland language group were reported in the highlands and 98.9 percent of lowland language group were confined to inner tarai and the tarai (Table 5). Highland language groups constituted one-fifth of the tarai and one-tenth of inner tarai population in 1991. In the mountain/hill, the share of highland Indo-Aryan, highland Tibeto-Burman and lowland Indo-Aryan speakers declined (Fig.3). In inner tarai, all but lowland Indo-Aryan speakers gained in share. In the tarai, highland Indo-Aryan as well as Tibeto-Burman speakers gained. The share of lowland Tibeto-Burman, Munda and Dravidian speakers declined in the tarai more in 1991 than in 1952/54. A notable change was the reporting of lowland languages in regions where there were none in 1952/54.

Fig. 3: Regional Population by Language Group 1952/54 and 1991
(In Percent)



Source: Table 5

The proportion of highland Indo-Aryan group in the tarai increased from 2.4 percent to 22.3 percent and that of Tibeto-Burman from 2.5 percent to 14.0 percent (Table 5). Much of this major shift in population by language group was due to inter-regional migration directed from the highlands to the lowlands. In 1952/54, nearly two-third of the population involving the 30 languages analysed were in the highlands. The rest were distributed as 29.0 percent in the tarai and 6.3 percent in inner tarai. By 1991, the highland share had declined to 49.2 percent while that of the tarai increased to 42.8 percent. All tarai and inner tarai regions had a higher share of population in 1991 than in 1952/54.

LINGUISTIC DYNAMICS

The preceding sections dealt with changes in population size by languages in terms of time and space. Some of the census data can be used to assess the relative position of the languages as an expression of their dynamics. These relate to mother tongue retention, bilingualism, and spread of the Nepali language.

a. Mother Tongue Retention

The 1991 census provides data on 32 languages and 60 ethnic/caste groups. A cross-tabulation of these data for comparable groups provides some measure of mother tongue retention. The number of ethnic/caste groups exceeds that of languages for two reasons. First, some social groups, particularly caste people, share the same language. This is the case for Nepali, the mother tongue of nine hill castes. Similarly, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Hindi, Maithili and Urdu are spoken by various tarai castes and Muslims. Secondly, some ethnic/caste groups are not listed in the language data of 1991. These are Bote, Dhanukh, Gangai, Jhangar, Lepcha, Raute, Satar, Sikh and Sunuwar.¹⁶ Conversely, Byansi, Jhangar, and Satar are reported as language groups but not as ethnics. The relationship of Urdu language is unclear with regard to the Churaute (hill Muslims). Thus, the number of social groups with related languages comes to 20 ethnics, and one each of caste (Marwari), and language (Bengali) groups (Appendix F). Since the languages of the Bhotia and Sherpa are reported singly as Bhot-Sherpa, the number of ethnics comes to 21 and their languages 20.

Table 6 summarizes the retention level of the various languages grouped by geographic areas. The highest retention level is recorded for the mountain group. It is followed by those of the tarai and eastern hill groups.

Table 6: Retention of Mother Tongue, 1991

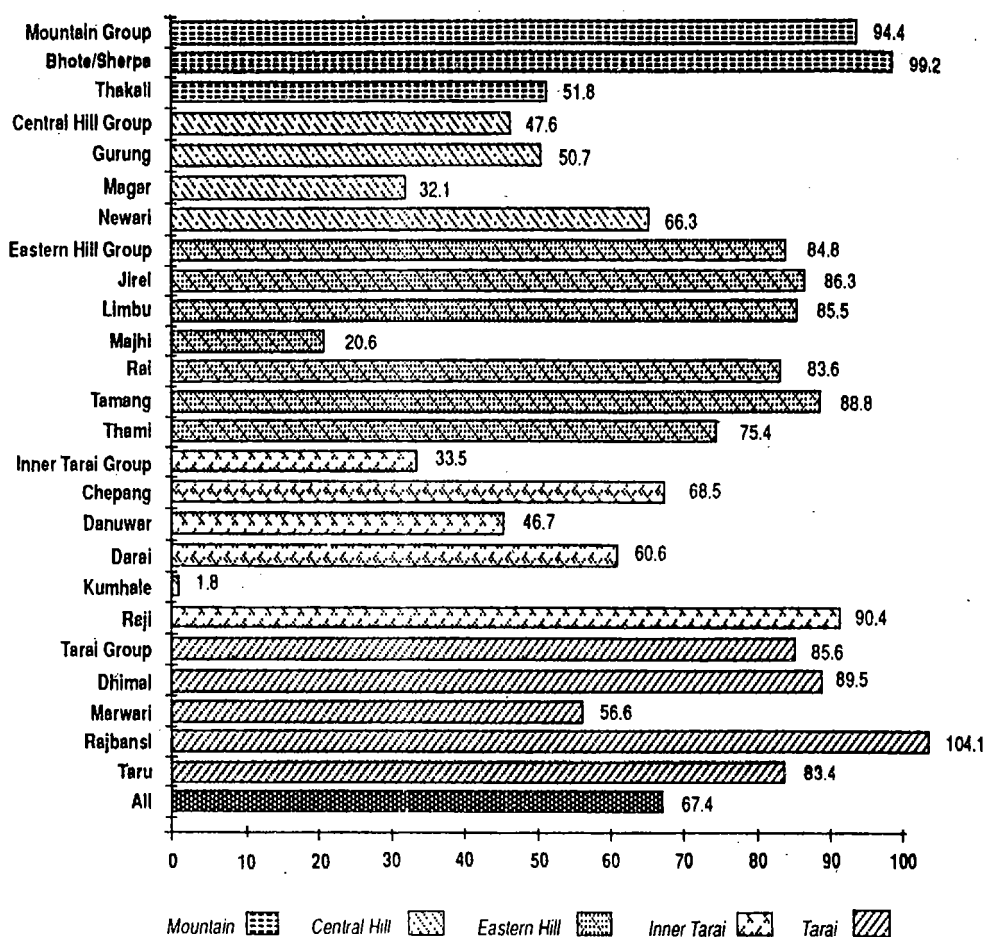
Regional Group	No. of Languages	Ethnic Population (%)	Mother Tongue Population (%)	Retention Rate (%)
1. Mountain	2	2.1	3.0	94.4
2. Central Hill	3	44.3	31.3	47.6
3. Eastern Hill	6	30.0	37.8	84.8
4. Inner Tarai	5	2.8	1.4	33.5
5. Tarai	6	20.8	26.4	85.6
Total	22	100.0	100.0	67.4

Source: Appendix F.

Languages vary widely in their level of retention. Bengali and Rajbanshi report more speakers than the population of their social group (Appendix F). In the case of Bengali, speakers exceed ethnic/caste population by three times. Rajbansi speakers are 104.1 percent of their reported ethnic population.¹⁷ Bhote-Sherpa and Raji rank high with over 90 percent retention of their mother tongue (Fig. 5). Those retaining over 80 percent include four Tibeto-Burman (Tamang, Jirel, Limbu, Rai) and one Indo-Aryan (Tharu). Thami retain three-quarter and Chepang, Newari and Darai over 60 percent. Marwari, Thakali and Gurung retain more than half. Those with low retention level are Danuwar less than half, Magar about one-third, Majhi one-fifth and Kumhal less than two percent.

Retention level of mother tongue among ethnics may be compared to their relative ranking in order of population magnitude by ethnicity and language. Thus, the Magar with the largest ethnic population rank fifth in mother tongue speakers. The Tharu rank first in language and second in ethnic population. The Newar come third both in ethnicity and language. The Tamang rank fourth in ethnicity but second in language. The next four in ethnic population rank within the first eight in language ranking. The Rajbansi rank ninth both in ethnicity and language. The Chepang rank 10th in language and 12th in ethnic population. The Kumhal rank 10th in ethnicity but last, 21st, in population of mother tongue speakers.

Fig. 5: Retention of Mother Tongue, 1991
(In Percent)



Source: Appendix F

Differences in retention level by individual languages is also reflected in the relative share of the groups in ethnic and language population. Thus, the mountain group with the highest retention level has 2.1 percent share of total ethnic population but 3.0 percent of the population speaking minority languages (Appendix F). On the contrary, inner tarai group with one-third retention level has 2.8 percent ethnic and 1.4 percent language share. Central and eastern hill groups present a contrast: higher population share for the former and higher language share for the latter. The tarai group has a share of a quarter in language population and one-fifth of ethnicity/caste population.

The reverse of retention is the loss of mother tongue indicated by attrition of population speaking one's language. Ethnic groups have been losing

their mother tongue mainly due to their adoption of prominent Indo-Aryan languages. This tendency is quite pronounced among some languages of inner tarai and central hill. The languages to gain from such shift in mother tongue are Nepali and tarai regional languages. Census 1991 reported a population of 7.5 million for hill castes, associated with Nepali, but 9.3 million reporting Nepali as their mother tongue. Obviously, the excess of 1.8 million Nepali speakers exceeding the caste population represents the extent of adoption of Nepali by other language groups.

Similar is the case regarding Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Hindi, and Maithili of the tarai. In 1991, the population with these languages as mother tongue totalled 4.1 million while the population of associated tarai castes was 2.9 million. This excess of 1.2 million speakers over the caste population implies gain at the cost of other ethnic languages. Another ethnic/linguistic equation of the tarai concerns the Muslim population versus Urdu language. Although the relationship between the two is not unequivocal, one may conjecture that 69.1 percent attrition in Urdu language among Muslims as their shift to other tarai languages. Overall, one-third of ethnic population have lost their mother tongue through attrition. On the other hand, population with Indo-Aryan mother tongue exceeds their associated caste population by 28.8 percent.

b. Second Language

Knowledge of another language may be taken as one marker of linguistic dynamics. Bilingualism is necessitated by the need for inter-ethnic and interregional communication. Data on second language speakers, available only for censuses of 1952/54 and 1991, provide information on the extent and trend of bilingualism. According to the 1952/54 census, about 1.3 million or 15.6 percent of the total population was bilingual or had knowledge of a second language. The reported second languages were 16, shared equally between Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman (Table 7). However, an overwhelming proportion reported speaking Indo-Aryan as the second language. Nepali alone claimed 86.6 percent of all with second language. The next in order were Hindi (5.3%) and tarai rural (4.7%). Newari with 0.7 percent led among the Tibeto-Burman group.

Table 7: Population Speaking Second Language, 1952/54

Language	Speakers		Mother Tongue Source					
	No.	%	Indo-Aryan		Tibeto-Burman		Others	
			No.	Row %	No.	Row %	No.	Row %
<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	<u>1,255,962</u>	<u>97.9</u>	<u>185,152</u>	<u>14.7</u>	<u>1,045,078</u>	<u>83.2</u>	<u>25,732</u>	<u>2.0</u>
1. English	7,032	0.5	4,417	62.9	2,419	34.4	187	2.7
2. Hindi	67,932	5.3	56,694	83.4	7,472	11.0	3,766	5.5
3. Maithili	3,321	0.3	2,977	89.6	275	8.3	69	2.0
4. Nepali	1,111,517	86.6	60,667	5.5	1,030,468	92.7	20,382	1.8
5. Tharu	3,139	0.2	2,619	83.4	154	4.9	366	11.7
6. Urdu	597	0.0	407	68.2	163	27.3	27	4.5
7. Sanskrit	1,529	0.1	1,369	89.5	151	9.9	9	0.6
8. Tarai Rural	60,904	4.7	86,002	92.0	3,976	6.5	926	1.5
<u>Tibeto-Burman</u>	<u>23,277</u>	<u>1.8</u>	<u>18,778</u>	<u>80.7</u>	<u>2,725</u>	<u>11.7</u>	<u>1,774</u>	<u>7.6</u>
9. Bhote-Sherpa	2,345	0.2	1,795	76.5	155	6.6	395	16.8
10. Gurung	1,997	0.2	1,470	73.6	462	23.1	65	3.3
11. Limbu	392	0.0	235	59.9	157	40.1	—	—
12. Magar	3,964	0.3	3,535	89.2	419	10.6	10	0.3
13. Newari	9,205	0.7	8,156	88.6	875	9.5	174	1.9
14. Rai-Kiranti	1,302	0.1	1,151	87.6	161	12.4	—	—
15. Tamang	2,910	0.2	2,420	83.2	487	16.7	3	0.1
16. Tibetan/Chinese	1,162	0.1	26	2.2	9	0.8	1,127	97.0
<u>Others</u>	<u>3,494</u>	<u>0.3</u>	<u>2,433</u>	<u>58.3</u>	<u>205</u>	<u>17.2</u>	<u>867</u>	<u>24.5</u>
Total	1,282,733	100.0	206,363	16.0	1,048,008	81.7	28,362	2.2

Source: Statistics Department, 1957, Vol.1, Part 11, Table 10.

The 1952/54 census also provides information on the mother tongue of those using each second language. The mother tongue source of the bilinguals was 81.7 percent Tibeto-Burman, 16.0 percent Indo-Aryan, and 2.2 percent others (Table 7). This is apparent from the need for ethnics to learn dominant Indo-Aryan languages. Another notable aspect is the strong tendency to turn to another language family for the second language. Thus, despite the lopsided ratio of 56 Tibeto-Burman speakers to every Indo-Aryan speaker, 80.7 percent of the latter had Tibeto-Burman and 83.2 percent of the former had Indo-Aryan as second language. Over 90 percent of those speaking Nepali as second language had Tibeto-Burman mother tongue.

The 1991 census provides data on second language use for all reported languages but not as to the mother tongue of the speakers (Appendix G). Those with second language in 1991 was 4.5 million or 24.5 percent of the total population as compared to 1.3 million or 15.6 percent in 1952/54.

Thus, the second language population increased by 3.2 million or 3.5 times in less than four decades. Of the total bilinguals reported, 92.3 percent had learnt one of the 15 Indo-Aryan languages. The share of 14 Tibeto-Burman languages among bilinguals was only 3.8 percent. The remaining 3.4 percent reported other local languages. Compared to 1952/54, the share of Indo-Aryan language speakers declined by 5.6 percent while that of Tibeto-Burman doubled.

In terms of individual languages, Nepali claimed three-quarter of all bilinguals (Appendix G). Hindi came second with 11.0 percent. Of the other four languages (over one percent), three were tarai Indo-Aryan (Bhojpuri, Maithili, Tharu) and one hill Tibeto-Burman (Rai-Kiranti). Other 25 languages had only a minor share among bilinguals. A comparison of second languages as percent of their mother tongue population indicates a marked significance of English and Hindi. Population of those with English as second language exceeds those with it as mother tongue by 15 times and Hindi as second language exceeds its mother tongue population by 2.9 times. In the case of Nepali, second language speakers constitute 36.0 percent of the mother tongue population. Small ethnic groups such as the Raji, Thakali, and Byansi also show high proportion of second-language in ratio to mother tongue speakers.

Of the data set on the second language available in the two censuses, only 13 languages are comparable, as Sanskrit, Tarai Rural and Tibetan/Chinese listed in 1952/54 census are excluded in 1991 report. The total bilinguals for the six Indo-Aryan languages and seven Tibetan languages comes to 1.2 million for 1952/54 (Table 8). They increased by 2.4 times to 4.2 million in 1991. The share of Indo-Aryan languages among bilinguals declined slightly while that of Tibeto-Burman languages gained. During 1952/54-91, bilinguals in Indo-Aryan languages increased by 2.4 times from 1.2 million to 4 million. Increase of bilinguals in Tibeto-Burman was much less despite a gain of 7.2 times due to their low base in 1952/54. Of the total 3 million increase in bilinguals, three-quarter were Nepali bilinguals. The second largest increase in bilinguals was for Hindi. Maithili, Rai-Kiranti, Tharu and Magar also gained considerably. In terms of relative increase, Limbu, Urdu and Rai-Kiranti gained most. Bhote-Sherpa recorded the least increase both in absolute and percent terms.

**Table 8: Population Speaking a Second Language,
1952/54-1991**

Language	1952/54		1991		Increase	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	Times
<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	1,193,429	98.3	4,021,621	96.1	2,828,192	2.4
1. English	7,023	0.6	42,021	1.0	34,998	5.0
2. Hindi	67,932	5.6	489,578	11.7	421,646	6.2
3. Maithili	3,221	0.3	71,226	1.7	68,005	21.1
4. Nepali	1,111,517	91.6	3,347,261	80.0	2,235,744	2.0
5. Tharu	3,139	0.3	48,603	1.2	45,464	14.5
6. Urdu	597	0.0	22,932	0.5	22,335	37.4
<u>Tibeto-Burman</u>	20,192	1.7	164,982	3.9	144,790	7.2
7. Bhote-Sherpa	2,345	0.2	4,635	0.1	2,638	1.1
8. Gurung	1,997	0.2	18,918	0.5	16,921	8.5
9. Limbu	217	0.0	10,203	0.2	9,986	46.0
10. Magar	3,964	0.3	37,118	0.9	33,154	8.4
11. Newari	9,205	0.8	22,129	0.5	12,924	1.4
12. Rai-Kiranti	1,302	0.1	48,334	1.2	47,032	36.1
13. Tamang	1,162	0.1	23,645	0.6	22,483	19.3
TOTAL	1,213,621	100.0	4,186,603	100.0	2,972,982	2.4

Source: Statistics Department, 1957, Vol.1, Part 11, Table 10.

CBS, 1993, Vol.7, Part VI, Table 23.

c. Spread of Nepali

Nepali language has become pre-eminent both as the *lingua franca* of the country and State language. In 1952/54, those reporting Nepali as mother tongue was 48.7 percent of the total population. Its share in subsequent censuses was 51.0 percent in 1961, 52.4 percent in 1971 and 58.4 percent in 1981. However, it came down to 50.3 percent in 1991. In 1952/54, over ninety percent of the population claiming Nepali mother tongue was concentrated in the highlands (Table 9). Of this, two-third was in west/central and a fifth in the eastern highlands. The rest were distributed as 5.7 percent in inner tarai and 2.3 percent in the tarai.

**Table 9: Increase of Nepali Mother Tongue Population,
1952/54-1991**

Region	1952/54		1991		Increase	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	Times
A. <u>Mountain/Hill</u>	<u>3,691,370</u>	<u>92.0</u>	<u>6,371,022</u>	<u>68.5</u>	<u>2,679,652</u>	<u>1.7</u>
1. West/Central	2,653,546	66.1	4,454,445.+	47.8	1,800,899	1.7
2. Kathmandu Valley	161,330	4.0	517,732	5.6	356,402	3.2
3. East	876,494	21.8	1,398,845	15.0	522,351	1.6
B. <u>Inner Tarai</u>	<u>228,558</u>	<u>5.7</u>	<u>857,850</u>	<u>9.2</u>	<u>629,292</u>	<u>3.8</u>
4. West	32,579	0.8	233,708*	2.5	201,129	7.2
5. Central	90,873	2.3	375,747	4.0	284,874	4.1
6. East	105,106	2.6	248,396	2.7	143,290	2.4
C. <u>Tarai</u>	<u>93,639</u>	<u>2.3</u>	<u>2,074,008</u>	<u>22.3</u>	<u>1,980,369</u>	<u>22.1</u>
7. West	7,735	0.2	534,904	5.7	527,169	69.2
8. Central	6,953	0.2	471,493	5.1	464,540	67.8
9. East	78,951	2.0	1,067,611	11.5	988,660	13.5
Total	4,013,567	100.0	9,302,880	1100.0	15,289,313	2.3

+Including Surkhet

* Excluding Surkhet

Source: Appendices B & C.

During 1952/54-1991, the population reporting Nepali as mother tongue more than doubled from 4.0 million to 9.3 million (Table 9). Its increase (131.8%) exceeded the country's average population increase (124.5%). Increase in Nepali language population was progressively higher at lower elevation zones: by 22.1 times in the tarai, 3.8 times in inner tarai and 1.7 times in the highlands. As a consequence, there was significant shift in Nepali mother tongue population by elevation zones and regions. Its highlands share declined from 92.0 percent to 68.5 percent while the tarai share increased from 2.3 percent to 22.3 percent. Highland regions except Kathmandu Valley lost in the share of such population while all lowland regions gained. The increase was particularly high in all tarai regions.

The large base as well as widespread growth of Nepali language has meant its increasing dominance. Nepali as a mother tongue now ranks first in 54 out of 75 districts in the country. Other languages with numerical dominance at district level are Maithili in six; Bhojpuri in four; Awadhi, Tharu, Newari and Tamang in two each, and Gurung, Bhote-Sherpa and 'other local language' in one each. These eight languages supersede Nepali in 21 districts. Again, Nepali ranks second in 18 districts. Rai-Kiranti is reported second ranked in 16 districts but those in eight western districts are

problematic. Similarly doubtful are the second ranking of 'other local languages' in five districts, mostly in the west. Other languages that rank second at district level are Tamang in 8, Magar in 7, Bhote-Sherpa, Gurung and Tharu in 4 each, Limbu in 3, Newari in 2, and Bhojpuri, Maithili, Rajbanshi and Urdu in one each.

Nepali is the mother tongue of majority population in 48 out of the 75 districts. Most districts that have over 90 percent Nepali mother tongue population are from the western sector (Fig. 6). Seven of these districts have 99 percent as Nepali speakers. Districts with 75 to 90 percent Nepali language population include 2 mountain and 3 hill districts. None of these are from eastern sector. Districts with 50 to 75 percent population with Nepali mother tongue include 3 mountain, 16 hill, 4 inner tarai, and 2 tarai districts. Of these, only two are from the tarai.

Nepali language population is in minority in 27 out of 75 districts (Fig.5). Fourteen districts with 33 to 49 percent Nepali mother tongue population include 3 mountain, 4 hill, one inner tarai, and 6 tarai districts. All districts in the western sector have over one-third of its population with Nepali language. Seven districts have 10-33 percent with Nepali language population. Of these, 2 are mountain and 5 tarai districts. Six districts have less than ten percent of their population with Nepali mother tongue. Five of these are in eastern tarai and one in western hill (Baitadi). Low percent of Nepali for Baitadi and Doti is due to unusual high reporting of 'other local languages'. The 13 districts with less than one-third of Nepali language population, include 10 tarai, 2 mountain and one hill district. In terms of the majority language in these districts, six are Maithili, three Bhojpuri and one each Awadhi, Gurung, Tamang and 'other local languages'.

The regional distribution of population with Nepali as mother tongue and as second language is shown in Table 10. Accordingly, 56.8 percent of those with Nepali mother tongue and 47.3 percent as second language are in the hills. Central hill leads with a quarter of the total population with Nepali mother tongue followed by western hill (Table 10). The region with the least share of Nepali as mother tongue is central mountain, and Nepali as second language western mountain. The tarai has a higher share in Nepali as second language than those with Nepali mother tongue. Nepali language as proportion of the regional population increases progressively towards higher elevation zones. It ranges from a quarter in the tarai to nearly three-quarter in the mountain.

Table 10: Population of Nepali Speakers, 1991

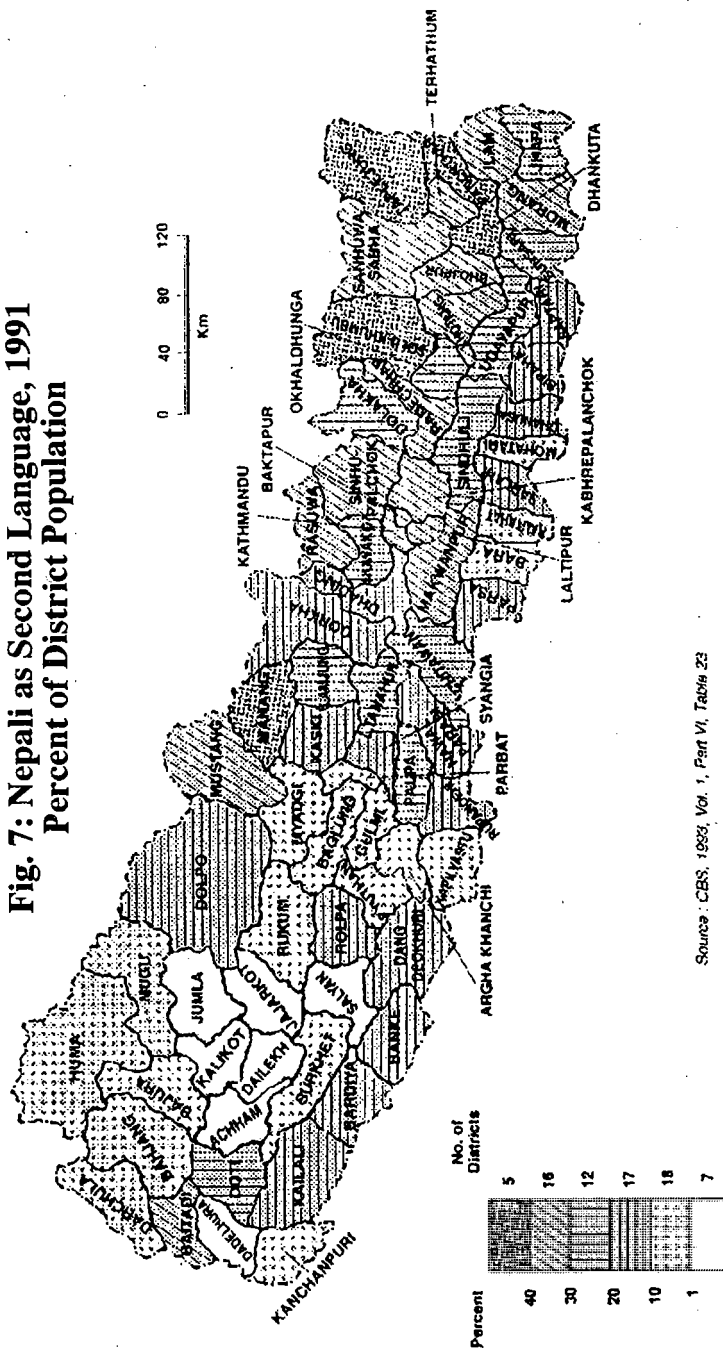
Region	As Mother Tongue	%	Percent of Regional Population	As Second Language	%	Percent of Regional Population
A. Mountain	878,552	9.4	74.3	223,283	6.7	18.9
1. West	564,836	6.1	95.2	13,171	0.4	2.2
2. Central	17,146	0.2	30.4	19,205	0.6	34.1
3. East	296,570	3.2	55.7	190,907	5.7	35.6
B. Hill	5,281,054	56.8	68.6	1,584,451	47.3	20.6
4. West	1,343,035	14.4	80.7	139,861	4.2	8.4
5. Central	2,318,012	24.9	78.7	401,783	12.0	13.6
6. Kathmand Valley	517,732	5.6	46.8	367,870	11.0	33.3
7. East	1,102,275	11.8	55.6	674,937	20.2	34.1
C. Inner Tarai	1,069,266	11.5	63.1	674,937	20.2	34.1
8. West	445,123	4.8	76.7	49,737	1.5	8.6
9. Central	375,747	4.0	56.2	188,667	5.6	28.2
10. East	248,396	2.7	55.8	121,147	3.6	27.2
D. Tarai	2,074,008	22.3	26.2	1,179,976	35.3	14.9
11. West	534,904	5.7	42.7	150,154	4.5	12.0
12. Central	471,493	5.1	35.4	155,947	4.7	11.7
13. East	1,067,611	11.5	20.0	873,875	26.1	16.4
Total	9,302,880	100.0	50.31	3,347,261	1100.01	18.11

Source: CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part VI, Tables 22 & 23.

Generally, districts with high percent of population with Nepali as mother tongue have lower share of those speaking Nepali as second language. Thus, a group of seven districts in the west with less than one percent of population speaking Nepali as second language (Fig. 7), happen to be among those having over 90 percent population with Nepali as mother tongue (Fig. 5). Conversely, all five districts with over 40 percent population having Nepali as second language are those with less than half the population with Nepali mother tongue. Three mountain and two hill districts have the highest, 40-49 percent, proportion of district population with Nepali as second language. The next group, ranging 30-40 percent, are mostly from eastern hill. Of the dozen districts in the 20-30 range, half are from the hill. Majority of 17 districts with 10-12 percent population speaking Nepali as second language are from the tarai. Those in the 1-10 percent range are mostly mountain-hill districts and majority from the west. The group of seven districts with the least proportion of population with Nepali as second language are from the western sector. Speakers of Nepali as second language in terms of percent of regional population varies between a low 14.9 percent for the tarai to high 34.1 percent for inner tarai. It is about the same proportion for the mountain and hill. The regions with over one-third of its population with Nepali as second language are eastern

mountain and hill (Rai-Limbu area), central mountain (Gurung-Tamang area), and Kathmandu Valley (Newar area). It is lowest in western mountain and hill, native area of Nepali language. The spread of Nepali is more pronounced among the Tibeto-Burman groups of central and eastern hills as compared to those with tarai languages.

**Fig. 7: Nepali as Second Language, 1991
Percent of District Population**



Source: CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part VI, Table 23

SUMMARY

Nepal is home to numerous languages and dialects due to various factors. One is its location at the convergence area of different linguistic groups from diverse sources. These are represented by hill Indo-Aryan from the west, tarai Indo-Aryan, Munda, and Dravidian from the south, and hill Tibeto-Burman from the east and north. They still retain their core areas according to the above coordinates despite significant population migration. Another factor is the diversity and ruggedness of topography that confine languages into discrete areas as well as induce regional variation into dialects.

Despite data limitations, one can discern some broad processes and patterns in linguistic demography. The process refers to temporal change while pattern concerns spatial change. In less than four decades, Nepal's total population more than doubled (124.5%). Compared to this, the increase was 131.5 percent for Indo-Aryan languages and 73.5 percent for Tibeto-Burman languages. Increase for Munda language was 98.1 percent and that of Dravidian a high 215.4 percent. Highland languages increased by 113.8 percent and lowland languages by 131.2 percent. Increase of Indo-Aryan language population was 131.2 percent for lowland and 131.8 percent for highland group. That of Tibeto-Burman languages ranged between 73.5 percent for the highlands and 150.1 percent for the lowlands. The highland Tibeto-Burman group recorded the least growth.

Of the 30 languages with comparable data for 1952/54 and 1991, 14 doubled in population. These included eleven Indo-Aryan, two Tibeto-Burman and one Dravidian. Five Tibeto-Burman, one Indo-Aryan, and one Munda language increased by three-quarter or more. Those increasing by less than three-quarter included six Tibeto-Burman and one Indo-Aryan. One Tibeto-Burman of the mountain and one Indo-Aryan of inner tarai recorded an absolute decline.

The share of highland language speakers declined in the west, increased in the central, and remained the same in eastern sector. The lowland language group had a slight gain in the central sector. The proportion of highland Indo-Aryan speakers declined in the west, gained slightly in the east, and more than doubled in central sector. Highland Tibeto-Burman speakers declined in the west but increased substantially in central and eastern sectors. The four lowland language groups show a divergent pattern. Indo-Aryan group increased marginally in all sectors, Tibeto-Burman group declined in the west and gained in central and eastern sectors while Munda and Dravidian groups made their inroads in central and western sectors.

The most significant trend was in the shift of highland language groups to lower elevations. Their share in the mountain/hill zone declined but

increased ten times in the tarai. Highland Indo-Aryan group (mainly Nepali) increased significantly in the tarai, particularly in eastern tarai. The increase of Tibeto-Burman share was also most notable in eastern tarai. Lowland Indo-Aryan group gained marginally while that of lowland Tibeto-Burman group declined in the tarai. Munda and Dravidian groups gained in inner tarai and mountain/hill.

Languages of the mountain group recorded a high level of mother tongue retention exceeding 90 percent. Those of the tarai and eastern hills came next with over 80 percent retention. Central hill languages retained less than half and those of inner tarai only one-third. The attrition of ethnic languages was obviously due to adoption of dominant Indo-Aryan languages by their people. Therefore, while ethnic languages had an attrition by one-third, Indo-Aryan languages of caste groups gained by 28.8 percent.

The total population reporting a second language was 1.3 million in 1952/54. Nearly 98 percent of these spoke Indo-Aryan languages with Nepali alone accounting for 86.6 percent. Another notable tendency was adoption of a language from another family, e.g. 83.2 percent with Indo-Aryan second language was from Tibeto-Burman mother tongue group and 80.7 percent with Tibeto-Burman second language was of Indo-Aryan mother tongue. The number of second language speakers increased by 3.5 times during 1952/54-1991. Over ninety percent of these spoke Indo-Aryan languages. Nepali claimed three-quarter of all bilinguals.

Nepali language dominates all other languages with a 50.3 percent share, the second ranked (Maithili) being only 11.9 percent. The increase of population with Nepali as mother tongue and as second language was 131.8 percent and 245.0 percent respectively during 1952/54-91. Its diffusion was most marked in the tarai. Nepali language has become pronounced for its pervasive presence. It is the mother tongue of majority population in 48 districts out of 75. Nepali as mother tongue ranks first in 54 and second in 18 districts. Nepali language is derived from *Khasa-kurā*, language of Khasa, with transitional apparitions as Parbate and *Gorkhāli*. It has since established itself as the *khaās-kurā* or the principal speech of Nepal.

Appendix A. Mother Tongue by Region, 1952/54

Mother Tongue	Western Hill	Ktm. Valley	Eastern Hill	Hill Total	West Inner Tarai	Central Inner Tarai	East Inner Tarai	Inner Tarai Total	West Tarai	Central Tarai	East Tarai	Tarai Total	TOTAL
I. HIGHLAND GROUP													
A. Indo-Aryan													
1. Nepali	2,553,646	161,330	880,054	3,695,030	32,579	91,142	105,388	229,109	7,735	6,953	80,469	95,157	4,019,296
2. Majhi	2,653,546	161,330	876,494	3,691,370	32,579	90,873	105,106	228,558	7,735	6,953	78,951	93,639	4,013,567
B. Tibeto-Burman													
3. Bhote-Sherpa	520,586	246,708	807,551	1,574,845	269	282	551	178,490	1,131	2,501	40,941	44,573	1,797,908
4. Byansi	17,588	289	52,255	70,132	151	113,281	65,058						70,132
5. Chepang	1,786	1		1,786									1,786
6. Gurung	367	505	9,147	159,206	30	13,893		13,893					14,261
7. Jirel	149,554		2,721	2,721		2,511		2,554	10	189	233	432	162,192
8. Limbu	8	63	144,933	145,004		5		5			502	502	145,511
9. Mager	181,611	810	50,848	233,269	80	4,823	22,039	26,942	35	578	12,956	13,559	273,780
10. Newari	53,976	225,819	76,514	356,309	38	12,568	3,518	16,124	1,044	1,618	8,089	10,751	383,184
11. Rai-Kiranti	12	52	221,089	221,153		34	12,043	12,077	20	65	2,734	2,819	236,049
12. Tamang	112,414	19,169	239,971	371,554	3	79,442	27,283	106,728	22	14	16,427	16,463	494,745
13. Thakali	3,270			3,270								37	3,307
14. Thami			10,073	10,073		5	162	167					10,240
II. LOWLAND GROUP													
A. Indo-Aryan													
15. Awadhi	37,126	2,451	3,800	43,377	56,585	34,529	16,609	107,723	226,316	338,593	1,680,929	2,245,838	2,396,938
16. Bengali	36,792	2,451	3,800	43,043	56,585	34,529	16,601	107,715	225,136	338,593	1,653,196	2,216,925	2,367,683
17. Bhojpuri		82	15	101	4,255	1	3	4,255	65,191	27		65,218	69,473
18. Danuwar	249	318	3,200	3,518		518		518	35	87	9,148	9,270	9,375
						1,723	3,652	5,375		258,168	16,335	274,503	275,270
											245	245	9,138

Appendix B. Mother Tongue by Region, 1991

	Mountain				Hill				Inner Tarai				Tarai				TOTAL	
	West		East		Total	KV	Central	West	Inner Tarai		Total	West	Central	East				
	West	Central	East	Total					Central	East					West	Central		East
1. HIGHLAND GROUP	584.473	54.792	511.115	1,150.980	1,378.670	2,917.747	1,073.343	1,934.481	7,304.241	455.993	606.147	403.254	1,465.394	551.739	559.310	1,403.155	2,514.204	12,434.219
A. Indo-Aryan	564.841	17.148	296.643	878.632	1,343.077	2,318.335	517.783	1,107.035	5,286.230	445.124	376.028	250.120	1,071.272	534.925	471.892	1,071.251	2,078.068	9,314.202
1. Nepali	564.836	17.146	296.570	878.552	1,343.035	2,318.012	517.732	1,102.275	5,281.054	445.123	375.747	248.396	1,069.266	534.904	471.493	1,067.611	2,074.008	9,302.880
2. Mahi	5	2	73	80	42	323	51	4,760	5,176	1	281	1,724	2,006	21	399	3,640	4,060	11,322
B. Tibeto-Burman	19.632	37.644	214.472	271.748	35.593	599.412	555.560	827.446	2,018.011	10.869	230.119	153.134	394.122	16.814	87.418	331.904	436.136	3,120.017
3. Bhote-Sherpa	13.674	5.892	48.867	68.433	179	6,263	7,479	31,463	45,384	55	527	2,561	3,143	366	183	4,310	4,859	121,819
4. Byansi	547	9	5	561	25	83	22	4	134	13	35	2	50	14	72	483	569	1,314
5. Chepang	1,733	4,245	862	6,840	963	178,960	9,405	3,914	193,242	157	9,341	117	9,615	1,286	10,208	6,727	18,221	227,918
6. Gurung																		
7. Jirel																		
8. Limbu	29	4	46,590	46,623	133	687	1,417	140,662	142,899	55	149	147	351	458	263	63,494	64,215	254,088
9. Magar	225	123	3,655	47,003	24,373	164,012	5,302	59,144	252,831	7,292	7,485	46,626	61,403	4,980	53,852	53,395	112,027	430,264
10. Newari	117	252	5,683	6,052	1,785	56,706	449,604	88,953	597,048	640	28,827	8,014	37,481	2,060	12,345	35,021	49,426	690,007
11. Rai-Kiranti	1,100	321	47,746	49,167	7,573	29,786	6,351	217,769	261,499	2,592	9,346	32,110	44,048	1,958	6,751	75,889	84,598	439,312
12. Tamang	2,006	24,552	47,441	73,999	377	157,271	75,500	282,175	515,323	41	153,868	63,238	217,147	5,493	3,044	89,450	97,987	904,456
13. Thakali	188	2,245	90	2,523	171	1,128	403	108	1,810	15	148	45	208	153	854	1,565	2,572	7,113
14. Thami	13	1	9,593	9,607	13	54	40	3,213	3,213	9	92	272	373	39	26	1,142	1,207	14,400
11. LOWLAND GROUP	1,082	363	1,830	3,275	4,033	16,086	23,909	12,076	56,104	121,917	59,457	38,557	219,931	633,896	765,606	3,861,954	5,261,456	5,540,766
A. Indo-Aryan	932	347	1,739	3,018	3,712	15,329	23,536	11,791	54,368	121,424	59,357	38,506	219,287	632,626	765,076	3,799,911	5,197,613	5,474,286
15. Awadhi	10	5	135	150	23	307	221	661	1,212	5,388	55	39	5,482	113,190	253,267	1,337	367,794	374,638
16. Bengali	3	4	49	56		62	778	101	976	6	27	42	75	322	113	26,170	26,605	27,712
17. Bhojpuri	107	66	144	317	1,274	1,972	2,255	632	6,133	146	3,087	146	3,389	846	398,549	970,483	1,369,878	1,379,717
18. Danuwar	1	15	16	32	13	68	677	5,743	6,502	4	147	11,731	11,882	53	46	5,206	5,305	23,721

19. Darai	268	12	7	7	1	2,251	21	580	2,273	1	3,739	1	3,741	11	307	181	499	6,520
20. Hindi					518	2,132	8,362	37	11,592	4,515	3,927	336	8,778	53,261	13,139	83,823	150,223	170,987
21. Kumbhale						868	2		907	200	102	9	311		109	86	185	1,413
22. Mathli	397	219	1,135	1,751	1,286	2,164	5,290	3,089	11,829	591	2,302	6,087	8,980	3,215	2,754	2,163,371	2,169,340	2,191,900
23. Marwari			15	15			1,351	257	1,615	5	154	33	192	118	497	14,077	14,692	16,514
24. Rajpansi	12	5	19	36	38	197	200	145	580	34	32	18	84	52	83	84,723	84,858	85,558
25. Tharu	126	13	54	193	462	957	1,478	428	3,325	109,516	44,774	19,561	173,851	452,354	89,225	274,440	816,019	983,368
26. Urdu	8	8	41	57	62	4,344	2,901	117	7,424	1,018	1,001	503	2,522	9,204	6,987	176,014	192,205	202,208
B. Tibeto-Burman	125	2	35	162	290	205	256	190	941	40	30	8	501	1,002		15,151	16,369	17,873
27. Dhimel			7	9		17	201	66	284	10	6	2	15		12	14,691	14,703	15,014
28. Raji	-125		28	153	290	188	55	124	657	453	24	6	483	1,002	204	460	1,666	2,959
C. Munda	25	14	53	92	31	543	106	95	775	30	55	32	124	285	309	31,767	32,341	33,332
29. Satar-Santali	25	14	53	92	31	543	106	95	775	30	55	39	124	265	309	31,767	32,341	33,332
D. Dravidian																		
30. Jhangar/Dhangar																		
III. OTHERS/UNSTATED	7,759	1,244	19,447	28,450	281,803	10,373	8,127	34,743	335,046	2,271	3,483	3,345	9,099	66,079	5,229	72,209	143,517	516,112
Other Local	7,844	489	7,7492	280,734	6,952	4,786	32,155	324,627	1,971	3,142	2,968	8,081	65,414	4,299	67,559	137,272	495,862	
Other Foreign	61	754	5,882	1,367	444	2,817	2,434	250	5,945	44	231	27	302	445	541	2,483	3,479	11,093
Not Stated	54	1	1,146	1,201	625	604	907	2,338	4,474	256	110	50	716	220	389	2,157	2,766	9,157
TOTAL	593,314	56,399	532,392	1,182,105	1,864,506	2,944,206	1,105,379	1,981,300	7,695,391	580,181	669,087	445,156	1,694,064	1,251,714	1,330,145	5,337,318	7,919,177	18,491,097

Source: CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part VI, Table 22.

Appendix C: Population Change by Mother Tongue, 1952-1991

Mother Tongue	1952/54	%	1991		Change	
	No.		No.	%	No.	%
I. HIGHLAND GROUP	5,816,934	70.6	12,434,219	67.2	6,617,285	113.8
A. <u>Indo-Aryan</u>	4,019,296	48.8	9,314,202	50.4	5,294,906	131.7
1. Nepali	4,013,567	48.7	9,302,880	50.3	5,289,313	131.8
2. Majhi	5,729	0.1	11,322	0.1	5,593	97.6
B. <u>Tibeto-Burman</u>	1,797,908	21.8	3,120,017	16.9	1,322,109	73.5
3. Bhote-Sherpa	70,132	0.9	121,819	0.7	51,687	73.7
4. Byansi	1,786	0.0	1,314	0.0	-472	-26.4
5. Chepang	14,261	0.2	25,097	0.1	10,836	75.9
6. Gurung	162,192	2.0	227,918	1.2	65,726	40.5
7. Jirel	2,721	0.0	4,229	0.0	1,508	55.4
8. Limbu	145,511	1.8	254,088	1.4	108,577	74.6
9. Magar	273,780	3.3	430,264	2.3	156,484	57.2
10. Newari	383,184	4.7	690,007	3.7	306,823	80.1
11. Rai-Kiranti	236,049	2.9	439,312	2.4	203,263	86.1
12. Tamang	494,745	6.0	904,456	4.9	409,711	82.8
13. Thakali	3,307	0.0	7,113	0.0	3,806	115.1
14. Thami	10,240	0.1	14,400	0.1	4,160	40.6
II. LOWLAND GROUP	2,396,938	29.1	5,540,766	30.0	3,143,828	131.2
A. <u>Indo-Aryan</u>	2,367,683	28.7	5,474,286	29.6	3,106,603	131.2
15. Awadhi	69,473	0.8	374,638	2.0	305,165	439.3
16. Bengali	9,375	0.1	27,712	0.1	18,337	195.6
17. Bhojpuri	275,270	3.3	1,379,717	7.5	1,104,447	401.2
18. Danuwar	9,138	0.1	23,721	0.1	14,583	159.6
19. Darai	3,084	0.0	6,520	0.0	3,436	114.4
20. Hindi	80,181	1.0	170,997	0.9	90,816	113.3
21. Kumhale	3,510	0.0	1,413	0.0	-2,097	-59.7
22. Maithili	1,485,726	18.0	2,191,900	11.9	706,174	47.5
23. Marwari	4,244	0.1	16,514	0.1	12,270	289.1
24. Rajbansi	35,543	0.4	85,558	0.5	50,015	140.7
25. Tharu	359,594	4.4	993,388	5.4	633,794	176.3
26. Urdu	32,545	0.4	202,208	1.1	169,663	521.3
B. <u>Tibeto-Burman</u>	7,185	0.1	17,973	0.1	10,788	150.1
27. Dhimai	5,671	0.1	15,014	0.0	9,343	164.8
28. Raji	1,514	0.0	2,959	0.0	1,445	95.4
C. <u>Munda</u>	17,258	0.2	33,332	0.2	16,074	93.1
29. Satar/Santhali	17,258	0.2	33,332	5.2	16,074	93.1
D. <u>Dravidian</u>	4,812	0.1	15,175	0.1	10,363	215.4
30. Jhangar	4,812	0.1	15,175	0.1	10,363	215.4
III. OTHERS/UNSTATED	24,197	0.3	516,112	2.8	491,915	2,033.0
Other Local	22,936	0.3	495,862	2.7	472,926	2,061.9
Other Foreign	509	0.0	11,093	0.1	10,584	2,079.4
Not Stated	752	0.0	9,157	0.0	8,405	1,117.7
Total	8,238,069	100.0	18,491,097	100.0	10,252,758	124.5

Source: Appendices A & B.

Appendix D: Population Increase by Sector, 1952/54-1991

Sector	Highland Group					Lowland Group								
	Indo-Aryan No.	%	Tibeto-Burman No.	%	Total No.	%	Indo-Aryan No.	%	Tibeto-Burman No.	%	Munda & Dravidian No.	%	Total No.	%
A. West	2,529,490	93.9	198,096	38.0	2,727,586	84.8	455,857	143.1	573	37.8	920		457,350	142.9
1. Hill	1,801,171	-67.9	178,513	34.3	1,979,684	62.4	-11,171	-30.4	721	215.9	626		-9,824	-26.5
2. Inner Tarai	201,129	617.4	3,900	2,582.8	205,029	626.4	57,538	98.2	30		26		59,594	105.3
3. Tarai	527,190	6,815.6	15,683	1,386.6	542,873	6,123.1	407,490	181.0	-178	-15.1	268		407,580	180.1
B. Central	1,106,278	426.4	510,607	196.8	1,616,885	260.0	472,396	125.8	502		501		473,399	126.1
4. Kathmandu Valley	356,453	220.9	308,852	191.4	665,305	763.0	21,085	860.3	256		117		21,458	875.5
5. Inner Tarai	284,886	312.6	116,838	103.1	401,724	196.5	24,828	71.9	30		70		24,928	72.2
6. Tarai	464,939	6,686.9	84,917	339.5	549,856	5,816.1	426,483	126.0	216		314		427,013	126.1
C. East	1,659,138	155.7	613,406	67.1	2,272,544	114.8	2,178,350	130.2	9,713	171.3	25,016	113.3	2,213,079	130.1
7. Hill	523,624	59.5	234,367	29.0	757,991	44.9	9,730	256.1	225		151		10,106	265.9
8. Inner Tarai	144,732	137.3	88,076	135.4	232,808	136.6	21,905	131.9	8		35	437.5	21,948	132.1
9. Tarai	990,782	1,231.3	290,963	710.7	1,281,745	1,055.7	2,146,715	129.9	9,480	167.2	24,830	112.5	2,181,025	129.8
TOTAL	5,294,906	131.7	1,322,109	73.5	6,617,015	113.7	3,10,603	131.2	10,788	150.1	26,427	119.7	3,143,828	131.2

Source: Appendices A & B.

Appendix E: Population Increase by Region, 1952/54-1991

Region	Highland Group						Lowland Group					
	Indo-Aryan		Tibeto-Burman		Highland Total		Indo-Aryan		Tibeto-Burman		Munda & Dravidian	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A. Mountain/Hill	2,681,268	72.6	721,732	45.8	3,403,000	64.6	19,644	45.6	1,202	359.9	894	50.1
1. West/Central	1,801,191	67.8	178,513	34.3	1,979,704	62.4	-11,171	-30.4	721	215.9	626	-26.5
2. Kathmandu	356,453	220.9	308,852	125.2	665,305	163.0	21,085	860.3	256		117	875.5
Valley												
3. East	523,624	59.5	234,367	29.0	757,991	44.9	9,730	256.1	225		151	265.9
B. Inner Tarai	630,747	275.3	208,814	117.0	839,561	206.0	106,271	98.7	68		131	98.8
4. West	201,129	617.4	3,900	2,582.3	205,029	626.4	59,538	105.2	30		26	105.3
5. Central	284,886	312.6	116,838	103.1	401,724	196.5	24,828	71.9	30		70	72.2
6. East	144,732	137.3	88,036	135.4	232,808	136.6	21,905	131.9	8		35	132.1
C. Tarai	1,982,911	2,083.8	391,563	878.5	2,374,474	1,699.3	2,980,688	134.5	9,518	138.9	25,412	134.3
7. West	527,190	8,165.6	15,683	1,386.6	542,873	6,123.1	407,490	181.0	-178	-15.1	268	180.1
8. Central	464,939	6,686.9	84,917	3,395.3	549,856	5,816.1	426,483	126.0	216		314	126.1
9. East	990,782	1,231.3	290,963	710.7	1,281,745	1,055.7	2,146,715	129.9	9,480	167.2	24,830	129.8
TOTAL	5,294,906	131.7	11,322,109	73.51	6,617,036	113.7	3,106,603	131.2	110,788	150.1	26,437	131.2

Source: Appendices A & B.

Appendix F: Retention of Mother Tongue, 1991

Ethnic Group	Ethnic/Caste Population (A)		Mother Tongue Population (B)		Rate of Retentio (A÷B)
	No.	%	No.	%	
A. <u>Mountain Group</u>	<u>136,552</u>	<u>2.1</u>	<u>128,932</u>	<u>3.0</u>	<u>94.4</u>
1. Bhote)	122,821		121,819		99.2
2. Sherpa)					
3. Thakali	13,731		7,113		51.8
B. <u>Central Hill</u>	<u>2,829,587</u>	<u>44.3</u>	<u>1,348,189</u>	<u>31.3</u>	<u>47.6</u>
4. Gurung	449,189		227,918		50.7
5. Magar	1,339,308		430,264		32.1
6. Newari	1,041,090		690,007		66.3
C. <u>Eastern Hill</u>	<u>1,920,031</u>	<u>30.0</u>	<u>1,627,807</u>	<u>37.8</u>	<u>84.8</u>
7. Jirel	4,889		4,229		86.5
8. Limbu	297,186		254,088		85.5
9. Majhi	55,050		11,322		20.6
10. Rai	525,551		439,312		83.6
11. Tamang	1,018,252		904,456		88.8
12. Thami	19,103		14,400		75.4
D. <u>Inner Tarai</u>	<u>178,078</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>59,710</u>	<u>1.4</u>	<u>33.5</u>
13. Chepang	36,656		25,097		68.5
14. Danuwar	50,754		23,721		46.7
15. Darai	10,759		6,520		60.6
16. Kumhale	76,635		1,413		1.8
17. Raj'l	3,274		2,959		90.4
E. <u>Tarai</u>	<u>1,330,264</u>	<u>20.8</u>	<u>1,138,186</u>	<u>26.4</u>	<u>85.6</u>
18. Bengali	7,909		27,712		350.4
19. Dhimal	16,781		15,014		89.5
20. Marwari	29,173		16,514		56.6
21. Rajbansi	82,177		85,558		104.1
22. Tharu	1,194,224		993,388		83.4
TOTAL	6,394,512	100.0	4,306,824	100.0	67.4

Source: A. CBS, 1993. Vol. 1, Part VI 1, Table 25.

B. CBS, 1993. Vol. 1, Part VI, Table 22.

Appendix G: Population by Second Language, 1991

Language	Speakers		As Percent of Mother Tongue Speakers
	No.	%	
A. <u>Indo-Aryan</u>	<u>4,124,666</u>	<u>92.3</u>	<u>27.9</u>
1. Awadhi	19,966	0.4	5.3
2. Bengali	2,505	0.1	9.0
3. Bhojpuri	74,148	1.7	5.3
4. Danuwar	467	0.0	2.0
5. Darai	900	0.0	13.8
6. English	42,021	0.9	1,509.4
7. Hindi	489,578	11.0	286.3
8. Kumhale	100	0.0	7.0
9. Maithili	71,226	1.6	3.2
10. Majhi	779	0.0	6.8
11. Marwari	933	0.0	5.6
12. Nepali	3,347,261	75.2	36.0
13. Rajbansi	3,217	0.0	3.8
14. Tharu	48,603	1.1	4.7
15. Urdu	22,932	0.5	11.3
B. <u>Tibeto-Burman</u>	<u>170,190</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>5.4</u>
16. Bhote Sherpa	4,635	0.1	3.8
17. Byansi	161	0.0	12.3
18. Chepang	1,449	0.0	5.7
19. Dhimal	405	0.0	2.7
20. Gurung	18,918	0.4	8.3
21. Jirel	105	0.0	2.5
22. Limbu	10,203	0.2	4.0
23. Magar	37,118	0.8	8.6
24. Newari	22,129	0.5	3.2
25. Rai-Kiranti	48,334	1.1	11.0
26. Raji	1,210	0.0	40.9
27. Tamang	23,645	0.5	2.6
28. Thakali	1,056	0.0	14.8
29. Thami	822	0.0	5.7
C. <u>Munda</u>	<u>1,898</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>5.7</u>
30. Satar-Santhal	1,898	0.0	5.7
D. <u>Dravidian</u>	<u>192</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>1.3</u>
31. Jhangar	192	0.0	1.3
E. <u>Other Local</u>	<u>151,150</u>	<u>3.4</u>	<u>30.5</u>
F. <u>Other Foreign</u>	<u>3,261</u>	<u>0.1</u>	<u>29.4</u>
TOTAL	<u>4,451,357</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>24.1</u>

Source: CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part VI, Table 23.

Notes

1. Rastriya-bhasa Niti Sujhav Ayog (RNSA), 1993, pp.5-6.
2. Statistics, Dept., 1957, Vol. 1, Part II, Table 9.
3. Bote, Hayu, Khambu, Meche, Pahari, and Danuwar.
4. Arabic, Gujerati, Kashmiri, Madrasi, Marathi, Punjabi, Sorath, Tamil, Tibetan, and Uriya.
5. Santhal and Satar are listed separately.
6. Jhanar and Tamil.
7. Malla, 1989, pp.449-451. The text, on the other hand, makes reference to 70 mutually unintelligible languages spoken in Nepal.
8. RNSA, 1993, Appendix One.
9. Hansson, 1994.
10. Hansson, 1991.
11. Statistics Dept., 1957, Vol. I, Part II, Tables 9 & 10. In Table 9, Rural dialect of west-central tarai should be 258, 135, and not 259, 015, based on the regional population reported.
12. According to the 1991 census, two-third of Awadhi mother tongue population is concentrated in Kapilvastu district (central-west of 1952/54 census definition). Bagmati river seems to mark the boundary between Bhojpuri and Maithili mother tongues. In Rautahat, west of Bagmati, 69.6 percent is Bhojpuri and 3.2 percent Maithili as mother tongue of the district population of 1991. In Sarlahi, east of Bagmati, 57.1 percent is Maithili and 10.2 percent Bhojpuri of the district population.
13. Therefore, note the low percentage of Nepali speakers in these districts in Fig. 5.
14. CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part VII, Table 25 for ethnic/caste and Vol. 1, Part VI, Table 22 for mother tongue.
15. In terms of sectors, 1952/54 census aggregated central and western hills. In terms of elevation zones, 1952/54 census recognized inner tarai but no mountain zone while the case was reverse for 1991 census. Appendix A follows the regional division of 1952/54.
16. Speakers reported in earlier censuses were: Bote - 649 (1952/54), Lepcha - 1,272 (1961), and Sunuwar - 17,299 (1952/54), 13,362 (1961), 20,280 (1971) and 10,650 (1981). Censuses report no language data for the tarai ethnics Dhanukh and Gangai, inner tarai ethnic Raute, and Punjabi Sikh.

17. Rajbansi group includes Koch as tribal, Rajbanshi as Hindu, and Tajpuriyas as Muslim. The 1952/54 census termed their language as Rajbanshi/Tajpuri but there is no ethnic data on the Koch and Tajpuriya in 1991 census.

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TOO MANY STARS AND NOT ENOUGH SKY¹: LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY AMONG THE THAKALI OF NEPAL

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Introduction: Setting the Anthropological Context

Given that the total Thakali population is under 15,000, the sheer volume of published anthropology on them is remarkable. By 1985, the Thakali were already the most studied group in Nepal in relation to their number - being the subject of over 50 published works by 15 trained anthropologists (Bhattachan & Vinding 1985:1).

For anthropologists interested in Himalayan populations, the Thakali make an obvious choice. Research permission is easier to obtain for the lower part of Mustang district than for many other similar Himalayan areas, and fieldwork conditions are excellent. Informants suggested that researchers have an "easy time" because the Thakali are "very open", and even "encourage anthropologists" in their research². The "existence of a cohesive sense of Thakali ethnic identity" is also cited as a factor explaining the attention given to the Thakali by anthropologists (Gurung & Messerschmidt 1974:212). Alongside their past involvement in the salt trade and their present control of the trekking economy along the Kali Gandaki river, the Thakali's growing alliance with Hinduism and their concomitant turning away from Buddhism have generated a great deal of interest among scholars of the Thakali. In fact, the controversy has even dominated academic discussions amongst the Thakali themselves.

The anthropologist Srinivas coined the term "Sanskritisation", defining it as

...the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste or tribal group changes its customs, rituals and ideology and way of life in the direction of a high...caste. (1967:6)

The concept has been consistently applied to the Thakali and pervades all accounts of their society and culture. As early as 1952, Tucci remarked on the recent conversion of some Thakalis to Hinduism, despite their allegedly Tibetan origins (1993:49). Fürer-Haimendorf related the changes in Thakali society to their transformation from a "segmentary tribal society" to a caste, a change brought about by the unfortunate impact of the "social ideology of Hinduism" (1966:2-3).

Fürer-Haimendorf described at length the abandonment of religious and ritual customs, as well as the shedding of habits such as the eating of yak meat, the drinking of alcohol and the wearing of traditional Tibetan-style clothes. He regarded these transformations in behaviour as prompted by the growing contact between some Thakali traders and the high-caste Kathmandu administration at the turn of this century.³ However, he found this "imitation" at best "half-hearted" (1966:150) and more indicative of the "camouflaged secularism" of the Thakali and their pursuit of "this-worldly goals" than of any wholehearted ideological conversion to Hinduism (1967:201). Consequently, although the majority of the Thakali have followed the lead of the Hindu minority, they have succeeded more in changing their image of themselves than in transforming their relations with other ethnic groups.⁴ In interviews, for example, Thakali informants repeatedly emphasised that a culture is a "dynamic" and "changing process", not a "museum piece", and that the strength of Thakali culture lies in its "flexibility."

More recent work, however, emphasises a "strong counter-movement" to Sanskritisation in Thakali society (Fisher 1987). Fisher, for example notes the "cultural continuity" of more traditional customs and practices, and so questions the very usefulness of the Sanskritisation thesis for understanding the Thakali (Ibid:4). He draws a further distinction between the tendency in all societies towards 'elite emulation' and the forms that this emulation may take in South Asia.⁵ He suggests that a low caste raising its status is a "structurally different process" from Sanskritisation, in which a group actually "adopts the values of the caste system" (Ibid:21) and concludes that the process of Sanskritisation is neither widespread nor "irreversible" (Ibid:289 & 294).

The Invention of Tradition

Surprisingly, no anthropological studies of the Thakali make explicit use of Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). Simply stated, their thesis contends that "traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented" (Hobsbawm 1983:1). Moreover, these "constructed" traditions are usually manifested during a

“rapid transformation of society” (Ibid:1-2). I contend that their thesis offers insights into the Thakali that the Sanskritisation thesis does not, and that scholars have implicitly (and maybe unknowingly) applied both theses to the Thakali case.

Fürer-Haimendorf suggests, for example, that the Thakali attempted to bolster their claim for a “high-caste status in the distant past” - specifically descent from the high-ranking Thakuris - by the “manufacture of historical evidence” (1966: 3 & 147). Upwardly-mobile Thakalis even changed their behaviour and outward appearance to back up these propositions.⁶ This was rarely because the old ways were “no longer available or viable”, but rather because they were “deliberately not used” (Hobsbawm 1983:8).

Fisher feels that such descriptions portray the Thakali’s adaptation as overly pragmatic. He suggests that the transformation of their group image should be seen as an indication of their malleability rather than as sign of their deceitfulness. The Thakali themselves, of course, view this adaptability as a strength. As one Thakali man proudly told me: “I haven’t seen any hard-line Thakalis.” However, this view is not held by Manzardo, who has claimed that the Thakali “rewrote their origin mythology, arranging for certain older versions to be conveniently lost in a fire” (1978:49).

Manzardo has been rightly criticised for his Machiavellian portrayal of the Thakali as adept “cultural chameleons” (Manzardo 1982:57). Drawing heavily on Goffman’s concept of “impression management”, he sees the Thakali as controlling the information that is disseminated about them through the active manipulation of the whole group’s “collective image” (Ibid:47). Hovering ambiguously between castigating their “dishonesty” and eulogising their pragmatism, his thesis also takes an implicitly Hobsbawmian position. For example, he sees their origin myths as little more than an attempt to “reconstruct the historical record” (Ibid:54).

Fisher is unsurprisingly critical of elements of Manzardo’s position - primarily of the economic opportunism implicit in his argument. Although I agree with his criticism, I would add that for many Thakalis, financial success and security remain of considerable importance; and that while falling far short of a universal ethnic characteristic, there may be more to Manzardo’s argument than Fisher has credited. I was continually reminded of the pragmatic “money-making nature” of the Thakali. As one influential Thakali leader put it:

money is not bad, it is not a thing which is considered a sin...it is a means to an end, you can do a lot of things with money.

In a similar, albeit more metaphorical vein, a Thakali lodge owner suggested that

the Thakali caste is like the bird who flies to the fruit tree that is heavy with fruit. We go where the money is — that's our character.

Although writing after the publication of *The Invention of Tradition*, Fisher at no point explicitly refers to the ideas it contains. Nevertheless, his conclusion reads like a piece of supporting ethnography to Hobsbawm's central thesis. The "recreation" of Thakali identity, he suggests,

establishes it in a way in which it has never existed before. To return to tradition - to become Thakalis again — is, in a way, to become Thakalis for the very first time. (1987:300)

While I agree both with Fisher's conclusion and also with his criticism of Manzardo's argument as being at points unsubtle, Manzardo is nevertheless the only author on the Thakali to have drawn attention to a further very important point.

Manzardo shows how Thakali "image-building" can seriously affect the gathering of ethnographic data. In all social interaction, he argues, the Thakali strive to create a "different impression of themselves" - not only to their neighbours - but also to visiting anthropologists (1982:53). According to Manzardo, because of their "good education" and their "sensitivity to others", Thakalis may "second guess" the anthropologist and "bias their answers in such a way as to help the anthropologist prove his point" (Ibid:54). It is now generally accepted that informants rarely give 'neutral' accounts of anything, and it is therefore unsurprising that anthropologists reach such different conclusions. However, in the case of Thakali informants, I would suggest that anthropologists have occasionally been provided with information that is intentionally contradictory or simply untrue.

According to Manzardo, the field-worker is "strongly subject to the Thakali's facility with impression management and must...keep his wits about him" (Ibid:54). As a suspicious informant remarked: "we are only 15,000 people but the world is watching us...the world is very curious about our culture."

The Thakali as anthropologists

The interest that many Thakalis express in their origins is not purely academic or historical. Despite much criticism of the applicability of the Sanskritisation thesis to the Thakali, it is indisputable that the Thakali have undergone a significant swing away from more overtly Tibetan and Buddhist practices. The interest some Thakalis show in anthropology may be partly motivated by their desire for conclusive 'proof' of their Thakuri or Hindu origin from respectable and professional foreign anthropologists, thereby rendering the Thakali distinct from other Tibeto-Burman groups.

I was reminded by a Thakali anthropologist that

once the anthropologists started writing, it became very difficult to capture the reality...anthropologists were interested in the history of the Thakali and they didn't agree with what the Thakali said...Once they began to write, a sort of discourse process started. Some people claimed one thing and others refuted it.

As Barth suggested, ethnic identity can be both a question of "source of origin" as well as of "current identity" (1969:29) — the former being of greater interest to the Thakali, the latter to the anthropologists working among them.

It is also significant that there exist internal status disputes between the three Thakali groups. The Tamang Thakali are the most prominent - mainly because of their "dominant economic and political influence" (Heide 1988:4) - and are concerned to see that they alone be called Thakali, since the name is "endowed with corresponding prestige" (Ibid:4). In the past, anthropologists have been used to vindicate this claim.

Fürer-Haimendorf, for example, refers to the Tamang Thakali of Thaksatsae as the "true" Thakali and to the population of Marpha as "not considered true Thakalis but clearly closely related to them" (1989:86) - labels which Fisher rightly finds "misleading" (1987:56). Likewise, Bista asserts that the Marphali population "look like Thakalis and have adopted much of the Thakali culture", but that "in the true sense of the word they are not Thakali" (1967:96). It seems that anthropologists working among the Thakali have been taken in by the claims of the Tamang Thakali to be autochthonous and have perpetuated the myth even further in their writing.

To an extent, this whole discussion relates to the assertion by a Nepalese anthropologist that foreign scholars have conducted research "with no relevance to Nepali society" for many years (Ram Chettri, in Onta 1992:31). The implication is that the anthropology of Nepal must become

accountable to the needs of the people it researches. In the case of the Thakali, should research only be conducted on the controversial issue of their origin, since this is what the Thakali themselves are interested in? I was forewarned of the dangers of conducting fieldwork by a Thakali who felt

...hurt by the people who wrote the Thakali books. If you also go that way you will hurt the Thakali people, so you please get information without hurting people more.

In brief, the wealth of research already conducted among the Thakali is both a help and a hindrance to the fledgling anthropologist. Although many important issues have been raised by in-depth ethnographic study, the published anthropology has affected both anthropologists and the Thakali themselves in their impressions of the group as a whole. This has led to a complex flow of information and a considerable cross-fertilisation of images and representations. However, the Thakali language has received no attention in this debate, and it is to the issues raised by the language that I now turn.

The Thakali Language

Although the Thakali language has at points been called "a special Tibetan dialect" (Snellgrove 1961:177), it is by all accounts a language in itself. Shafer's somewhat confusingly-worded classification places the Thakali language in the Gurung Branch of the Bodish Branch of the Bodish Section, of the Bodic Division of the Sino-Tibetan family (1955:100).

Whilst the Census for Nepal recorded almost 14,000 "ethnic" Thakalis in 1991, the population of mother-tongue Thakali speakers was allegedly only 7,113 in the same year (CBS Statistical Pocket Book 1996:19 & 23). It is generally agreed that the diversity of languages in Nepal is decreasing as the unification of the country proceeds (Hutt 1986:1). Nowadays, the Tamang Thakali dialect is spoken primarily in the village of Tukche, by Thakalis and non-Thakalis alike, and to a lesser extent in the other villages of Thaksatsae. Outside the valley, however, even in quite traditional Tamang Thakali households, the language is little spoken.

As early as 1958, Iijima reported that the Thakali of Tukche did not generally converse in Thakali (Hutt 1986:16). Despite pleas by the Central Committee, few Thakalis are making an effort to learn their language.⁷ Yet virtually every Thakali I spoke to felt the continued existence of the Thakali language to be central to their Thakali identity. Informants articulated this feeling differently. As one put it:

Thakali identity can't exist if nobody speaks Thakali. I mean how can you be an Englishman if you only speak Italian?...I mean look at the proof of being a man, you have a pee thing. If not, how can you say you are a man? It is like that with the Thakali and their language.

Other informants suggested that "language is the most basic thing for society" and that "where there is no language, there is no culture." One informant went as far as to point out the greatest paradox of all:

Look we are now speaking English, you are the anthropologist and should be speaking our language, but no, we are speaking English.

However, relatively few children are brought up with Thakali as their mother-tongue and so learning the language requires a concerted effort. Moreover, most now invest their time in learning second languages with a wider appeal and relevance - either Newari or Gurung if they live in areas with large populations of these groups (Chettri 1986:252); or English, German or Japanese (Heide 1988:88). To some extent, Thakali has become a 'secret' language used for private conversations or business dealings, according status to the few remaining speakers.

Nevertheless, in one community in Tukche the Thakali language is still spoken fluently by individuals of all ages.

Aransi Karansi: The Non-Thakali Thakali

In 1962, 64 out of 92 houses in Tukche were occupied by Tamang Thakalis. By 1972, this number had dropped to 9 (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975:202). The remaining houses were (and still are) occupied by a heterogeneous group for whom there exists no name that is both accurate yet not disparaging - perhaps a good indication of their significantly 'inferior' status. As one Thakali succinctly put it: "These people have sort of captured Tukche". In fact, among the Thakali the whole topic is taboo - Heide found that "people don't like to talk about it" (1988:10).

These people are variously referred to by the Thakali as "duplicate Thakalis", *Aransi Karansi* (Thak. "someone out to get a job"), *Bhotey* (Nep. "Tibetan-like person")⁸ and *Baragaonli* (Thak. & Nep. "person from one of the 12 villages north of Jomsom"). Since none of these terms is appropriate, it is necessary to fall back on the somewhat clumsy phrase 'non-chan Thakali', emphasising only the fact that they do not belong to one of the four Tamang Thakali patrilineages, the Nepali forms of which all end in '-chan'.

While many of the non-chan Thakali came from northern Mustang to find work in Thak Khola, others had fallen into debt to rich Thakali families and were forcibly resettled in Thakali villages to work for their creditors. Bista reports that the Thakali households in Tukche at one time supported over 1,000 servants, many of whose descendants now live in Tukche (1971:57). Some have now purchased land and property from migrant Thakalis and run their own tourist lodges, others still work the land of absent Thakali families. From the moment of their arrival, these people occupied an inferior position within Thakali society and they are still "acutely aware of their lower status" and "do not like to be reminded of their origin" (Fürer-Haimendorf 1966:158). Non-Thakalis now make up 85% of the population of Tukche, most of whom are from this non-Tamang Thakali group.⁹

Until recently, the non-Tamang Thakali participated only peripherally in the social life of the Tamang Thakali, primarily because they were formerly not allowed to own land or property in the area, and were consequently not considered to be "village community members" (Gauchan & Vinding 1977:100). Perhaps most interesting and important, however, is their emulation of the Tamang Thakali - a point which has been noticed by only very few anthropologists.

In 1966, Fürer-Haimendorf found the non-chan Thakali to be emulating the Thakali "dress and style of living", although he considered them unsuccessful in their attempted penetration of the "inner circles of Thakali society" (1966:158). Their success at presenting themselves as Thakali to outsiders, however, is absent from his account. Much to the displeasure of the Tamang Thakali - the allegedly "true" bearers of the name - the non-chan Thakali use the word 'Thakali' as a surname, and sometimes even refer to themselves as Tamang Thakali (Fisher 1987:81; and Heide 1988:11). Of course, most non-Thakali Nepalese are unaware of these internal divisions. As the non-chan Thakali now own a significant number of lodges along the trekking route, many tourists interact primarily with them. The implications of this are twofold.

First, given the paucity of Tamang Thakalis in Tukche and the concomitant prevalence of non-Tamang Thakalis, the latter group is more responsible than the former for managing the representation of the Thakali in general to tourists visiting the area. Speaking the Thakali language, wearing traditional Thakali dress and following Thakali 'culture' (albeit loosely and in an 'unorthodox' manner, as claim most Tamang Thakalis), the non-chan Thakali outwardly appear *more 'Thakali' than the Tamang Thakali*, who neither speak their language nor wear Thakali dress anymore, and most of whom have left Thak Khola.

Second, the non-chan Thakali have risen significantly in status and wealth. They are now largely independent of the Tamang Thakali and have effective control of the tourist economy in the upper parts of Thak Khola. The Tamang Thakali have only recently begun to reinvest in Tukche and hope to restore the village to their ownership. This has created considerable animosity between the two groups. It is worth noting that the Tamang Thakali still champion their own 'authenticity' and disparage the non-chan Thakali for their 'duplicity'.

The issue of the Thakali language is central to the debate for both sides, most particularly because 'speaking' Thakali is seen as an index of ethnic identity. The irony in this case, however, is that the Tamang Thakali have all but lost their language while the more 'recent' non-chan Thakali have learned it and use it. One Thakali in Baglung District found this "shameful", noting that in Thak Khola

...all the other castes know the Thakali language, but here
real Thakalis don't even speak it, what a simple thing.

Non-chan:Thakali::Thakali:Hindu¹⁰

According to Barth, "pariah groups" are actively rejected by the host population because of their "condemned" behaviour - despite their frequent usefulness in some "specific practical way" (1969:31). Moreover, the boundaries of these groups are most strongly maintained by the excluding host population. By these criteria, the non-chan Thakali are a classic pariah group - disparaged for their Tibetan cultural extraction although useful to the Tamang Thakali for domestic labour. In short, while the non-chan have embraced Thakali culture and sought admission into Thakali society, the Tamang Thakali have perpetuated the exclusion of the non-chan Thakali from Tamang Thakali social life by maintaining the barriers that separate the groups from one other.

Paradoxically though, Barth's theory of pariah groups may equally be applied to the Tamang Thakali. In their attempt to "pass into the larger society" of Hindu Nepal, the Tamang Thakali had to escape the "stigmas of disability" by dissociating themselves from their own community and by "faking another origin" (Barth 1969:31).

The emulation of the Tamang Thakali by the non-chan Thakali thus closely parallels the emulation of high-caste Hindus by the Tamang Thakali themselves. In short, while some Thakalis were busy 'de-Thakalifying' themselves and were adopting more Hindu beliefs and customs, another group was engaged in a process of 'Thakalification' to gain status, prestige and access to reserved resources. This important dynamic has gone largely

unnoticed in the anthropological literature on the Thakali. Fisher makes a passing reference to the process, but all details remain implicit:

where the Thakali have become established as the dominant local group...they must be considered not only as the emulators of some other elite group but also as the models for emulation. (1987:25)

In conclusion, there is emulation both *by* the Thakali and *of* the Thakali. The emphasis by the Tamang Thakali on common descent rather than common culture as the criterion for group membership now becomes more understandable. As one informant stated: "I can only say that my father is Thakali and that is why I am Thakali". Without this tight restriction on membership, an average non-chan Thakali would qualify better for Thakali status on the grounds of language and 'culture' than would many the Tamang Thakali.

Conclusion

Not only is the term Thakali itself a changing category, but the name Thakali means different things to different people, just as it has indicated various things to a variety of scholars at different times (Fisher 1987:83). For example, the claim of the non-chan Thakali to be Thakali is a claim to be part of a *jat* - to share "social status in the context of Nepalese society", while for the Tamang Thakali on the other hand, it is an "assertion of identity, a claim of membership of a bounded group" (Ibid:91). Thus, neither group is more (or less) Thakali than the other, but each is so according to different criteria. Likewise, it must be concluded that the Thakali identification with trade, language and traditional dress is prevalent only within a particular subgroup of Thakali society.

I suggest that in the case of the Thakali, interaction between the different groups has not led to the liquidation of ethnic difference. Rather, it has led to the persistence of these cultural differences despite both considerable inter-ethnic contact and a degree of inter-dependence. While the Tamang Thakali have refined and redefined their identity through limited Hinduisation and by an involvement in their representation in anthropology, the non-chan Thakali have revived select culture traits and established "historical traditions to justify and glorify the idiom and the identity" (Barth 1969:35). Speaking the Thakali language provides a universally recognised badge of identity for the non-chan Thakali with which most Tamang Thakali cannot compete.

Despite the volume of ethnography on the Thakali, there is much valuable research still to be done on the decline of the Thakali language, the identity of the non-chan Thakali groups, and on their interactions with the dominant Tamang Thakali - issues which this article only begins to tackle.¹¹

Notes

1. This article draws on fieldwork conducted during the summer of 1994 in Nepal. It would not have been possible without financial support from the Frederick Williamson Memorial Fund and from Queens' College, Cambridge. I am much obliged to William F. Fisher, Alan Macfarlane and Charles Ramble for advice and support. My greatest thanks must go to the Thakali themselves for their candour and hospitality, and most particularly to Bhuvan Gauchan for opening many doors for me.
2. Throughout the text, citations in double inverted commas without a reference in brackets indicate transcribed speech from informants. Some of the quotations come from formal interviews, others from more informal conversations. I have taken the liberty of translating into English the comments of informants who conversed in Nepali or Thakali. Names are withheld to protect the identity of all people I spoke with.
3. Fürer-Haimendorf 1966, especially p.140-160. The Buddhist way of life of the Thakali inhibited the establishment of "satisfactory social relations with the dominant classes of Nepalese society", p.144.
4. Fürer-Haimendorf 1966, p.160 suggests that the Thakali are "becoming a caste because they think of themselves as a caste". For a critique of this position see Fisher 1987, p.15.
5. Fisher 1987, p.19-23. These forms he variously labels as "Sanskritisation", "Brahmanisation", "Hinduisation" and even "Nepalisation".
6. As already cited, certain Thakalis hoped to purify themselves in the eyes of higher castes by not consuming yak meat or alcohol.
7. Fisher 1987, p.278 suggests that this encouragement be seen in the light of the fact that no meetings which he ever attended were conducted in Thakali. He quotes a Thakali elder as saying "when we want to talk about important matters we speak Nepali".
8. Ramble 1993, p.17 shows how although the name itself is "innocuous enough", it is nevertheless loaded with negative connotations.

9. Other Tukche residents include the so-called Hindu 'occupational castes', such as tailors and cobblers, many of whom - despite not being autochthonous to the area - now speak fluent Thakali.
10. The format of this section heading is taken from J. A. Barnes "Genetrix: Genitor : : Nature: Culture", in *The Character of Kinship*, ed. J. Goody, (Cambridge, 1973) p.61. A clumsier although more accurate heading would read "non-cha Thakali: Tamang Thakali : : Tamang Thakali: high-caste Hindu".
11. Fisher 1987, p.82 likewise suggests that the Aransi Karansi have "yet to be adequately investigated".

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CREDIT RELATIONS IN NEPAL: A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE KHATSARA AND MANANGE *KIDU* SYSTEMS

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While the cultural and religious importance of mutual help institutions has been emphasized by scholars of Nepalese culture, the socioeconomic aspects of such institutions and systems have only in a few instances received broad recognition. Any deficiency of information on the subject has become more crucial nowadays, since the economic development of Nepal has come to terms with an ever growing demand for goods and services in various domains of the economy. A change in the attitude and organization of development institutions towards accepting a broader involvement and responsibility of the people themselves has been effected in some cases already. Among credit organizations however, there remains a tendency to introduce models of credit and banking that are external to the culture they are servicing (cf. Rankin 1996:396), notwithstanding the fact that saving and credit "cooperatives" have also been founded by the people themselves after the introduction of the Cooperative Act in 1992 (2049 B. S.). The former proposal of the government¹ to introduce Wholesale Banking Loans in order to provide more people with the means to start an enterprise or satisfy their urgent needs of consumption, suggests that at least for an intermediate period traditional ways of providing credit will remain indispensable. On the one hand, there are the traditional moneylenders, and on the other, the longstanding systems of mutual help, such as the *guthis* of the Newars, the *kidus* of Tibetan-oriented populations and the *dhikur* system of the Gurungs, to note only some well-known examples².

In this paper³ I am concerned with the kidu system established by migrants of the Khatsara Newars, descendants of former residents in Lhasa, and the kidu system of Manange migrants from the Manang-Bhot area in North-Central Nepal, both migrant groups residing nowadays in the Kathmandu Valley. Veronika Ronge (1978:112-16, 131-136) has provided an outline of the organization of *kidus* that were formerly operating in Tibet, and pointed to their possibly higher involvement in political affairs.

In her study, primarily concerned with communities of craftsmen, she has argued other than Barbara Miller (1956), that the kidu organizations of Tibetans were not really of indigenous origin, but were established on the example of the *guthi* system of the Newar traders in Lhasa (Ronge 1978:132-136). Either way of looking at it, however, as a borrowing from outside or an internal innovation, should also encourage to explain the possible differences within such institutions are not explained (cf. Regmi 1978:629f.). In a recent article, Bernhard Kölver (1996:36,42,45) has shown how the *guthis* themselves, under the historical circumstances of the Malla period, developed internal differences according to whether they served the Great Tradition of the royal endowments or the needs of the common people. Whereas in the former case religious and status-related concerns dominated, providing only the priest with economic benefits, in the latter case *guthis* were serving socioeconomic interests as well, in that their members recorded "deposits" in the name of the *guthi* or its deity -- deposits that were given to cater to specified social needs.

In looking at the kidu organizations, one important distinguishing aspect seems to be the amount of control and how such control is organized in the implementation of social aims, especially concerning funds and the distribution of credits. Other aspects, including the relationship between social control and cultural values, will also be touched upon. Apart from the differences one important common feature comes to the fore: the value of redistribution which impacts on credit relations of the market-place as long as they are embedded in the cultural system.

The Khatsara kidu and Relations of Credit

The Khatsara *kidu* is culturally exceptional, since it was established, as the name implies, by descendants of mixed parentage, namely of Newar traders and their Tibetan wives from Lhasa⁴. In 1974 (2031 B. S.) the organization was officially registered M *Tibbetma Janmeka Nepāliharuko Kalyāṅkari Samiti* (Welfare Association of Nepalese born in Tibet'). According to a member of the kidu the Nepali term "Khatsara" refers to the parentage, while the Tibetan term *kidu* has the meaning of "help-network", referring more precisely to the help that is offered in good (Tib. *kibu*) and bad (Tib. *dü-nyen*, bad', 'degenerate') times. There are nowadays in du also kidus of other groups of Tibetan origin, such as the one of people Owing their ancestry to Khampas and those of people coming from the region of Kham, Shigatse, Kerong etc. Thus the *kidu* system is primarily based on common origin.

In contrast to most of the other *kidu* systems, the Khatsara kidu was established by legal migrants who after the breakdown of the trade with

Tibet in 1960, when the Chinese closed the borders, were recognized as legal citizens of Nepal by the Chinese. By contrast most of the other *kidus* in Nepal were founded as help-networks by and for refugees who escaped the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

Still today the migration problem is one of the main concerns that the elected official members of the kidu have to concern themselves with. These elected officials were referred to in Tibet as *bompos*, while nowadays the Nepali term *adekche*⁵ is applied (in descending order: *upādhyekche* and *Kosādekche*). As official spokesmen, they may provide legal assistance to those migrants from Tibet who claim Nepalese citizenship. Other important duties of these officials elected to a three year term are their functions as mediators in conflicts on the family level or between affinal relatives, thus keeping up a sense of solidarity among the 407 households (Tib. *micang*), belonging to the *kidu*⁶. They also collect voluntary donations (Tib. *sheldib*) for religious, social and, in part, economic purposes that are seemingly interconnected and will be described below⁷.

The interconnectedness of religious, social and economic aspects of the *kidu* system lies in the fact that, besides common origin as a seemingly sufficient attribute for membership in the *kidu*, the proved interest of the partaking persons in the cultural, social and religious values of the community (Tib. *tsogpa*) is equally important. Thus people of other regional and even cultural origin may take part in the *kidu* system if they have proven that they respect and favour the values of the community. Outsiders may be introduced by friends who are themselves members of the community. Relations of trust (Tib. *yidche*, 'trust', 'belief') lie at the heart of the system and are reinforced through ceremonial exchanges.

These ceremonial exchanges may thus be considered first. Though there are no fixed dates or ceremonial occasions when one has to make donations (Tib. *sheldib*) to the *kidu*, it is expected that during the feasts (Tib. *trotro*, 'party') of life-cycle events people should give *shogchya* ('paper-offerings', 'money, that is wrapped into a scarf or put into an envelope') to the host of the feast. These formal donations are noted in a book and are reciprocated at similar events of the donor. Apart from material gifts there is also an emphasis on service or labour exchange (Tib. *rokram*) at these events. Life-cycle rites include not only birth, marriage and death rites, but also the erection of the flag-post (Tib. *tarcho*), on the occasion of inaugurating a new household. All the formal gifts and reciprocal services at these events strengthen ties of trust within the *tsogpa*, and it is by way of them that outsiders known as friends from trade, for example, may also be introduced into it. The *tsogpa* also meets on other festive occasions, especially Losar (New Years) and Dasain (even though a Hindu festival), and arranges picnics

(Tib. *lingka*) at these times. Contributions for the *kidu* system are then made in an indirect way: since card playing is a welcome activity at these gatherings there is a rule to give ten per cent of one's profit as a donation to the *kidu* organization. - Though this amounts to only a small contribution, the sense of solidarity and the feeling that one should give part of one's profit from business for social and religious purposes are highlighted.

Part of the donations collected at such gatherings, and those collected by officials visiting the member households of the *kidu* system when special works are planned is used for religious purposes. These include the repainting of the Swayambhu Stupa as well as the renewal of its *nhamsa* (the sacred cloth surrounding the upper part, the *harmika*) which is carried out at Losar, Buddhajayanti or at the feasts during gyewa (mortuary rites).

Another part of the donations is devoted to social matters, with scholarships, for example, being provided for pupils from poor households, which do not necessarily belong to the *kidu* system, and may even be from outside the *tsogpa* community itself. There is also the ambition to secure basic health care. Inspired by other welfare associations the official members of the Khatsara *kidu* have decided to buy two ambulances for the community, to be on call also for people outside it. However, although some time ago they have been able to collect a substantial sum of money from the *kidu* member households, they have for reasons of leadership not yet been able to make good on this pledge. It is interesting to note this example, because it shows that there are no sanctions for misconduct, beyond the loss of trust. On the other hand, if people are known to be trustworthy (Tib. *yidche*), even a poor or unfortunate member of the community has the chance to receive communal attention. Thus one of the officials may go with him from house to house, explain his circumstances and ask for donations to help him out of his misery. Since the official would be helping him there would be no "loss of face" (Tib. *ngo tsabo*, 'to be much ashamed'), and the donations would be considered free of the need to reciprocate.

There are also economic aspects of the Khatsara *kidu* system. Being formerly established by the richer members of the organization, it owns a house in the area of Swayambhunāth, which is rented out to a school and thus brings in some income to the *kidu*⁸. Over time the organization has been able to collect some surplus, which is traditionally made available to private members of the *kidu* as credit⁹. Again, the interest gained from such credits may be used for social and religious purposes.

Finally the system of informal credit relations within this Tibetan cultural setting may be considered. As was already stated, the *kidu* system as a social trust system or help-network is based on a long-term reciprocity of

services and ritual gifts as well as on mutual confidence, that is concretely expressed in voluntary donations for social and religious purposes, and again reinforced by the sharing of a common cultural background. It is in such a cultural setting that even the purely economic credit relations of the marketplace come to be primarily based on trust. In what the Tibetans generally call *bulön* ('credit') relations there is, besides the consideration of trustworthiness (Tib. *yidche*) of the debtor, no formal guarantee as concerns the interest (Tib. *kyeka*, Nep. *byāj*) on the loan, no necessary land guarantee with regard to the principal (Tib. *matsa*) and no special charge for a delayed repayment, other than the compound interest (Nep. *syāj*)¹⁰. While the interest itself runs between 2 and 3 % per month, and is thus higher than that demanded by a bank, its aforementioned features make it more convenient if possible, to take out a loan in an informal, private way. Among other reasons the interest is here higher because, according to Nepali law, a private creditor is, in case of his client's insolvency, only allowed to redemand the principal, not the interest or only 10 % interest, if he wants to make a legal issue of it. Thus a private creditor bears a higher risk than a bank, which will demand land as a guarantee for credit.

The interconnectedness of cultural values, religious, social as well as economic in scope, seems to be one main feature of the traditional and informal help and credit relations within the community of the Khatsara *kidu*. While there are also tendencies to provide help and services 'to outsiders, the primary focus is on people of own's own culture. One special characteristic of these relations undoubtedly is that both religious and social as well as economic relations are embedded in a long-term span of reciprocity, for which there is no clear-cut boundary between socio-religious and economic spheres. In both spheres of exchange there is an emphasis on balanced, but at the same time long-term relations of reciprocity, as evidenced on the one hand by voluntary gifts apart from any formal event, and on the other hand, by speculation less on the material basis of one's debtor than on his or her trustworthiness.

The Manange *kidu* and Relations of Credit

The Manange *kidu* was founded in 1980 (2037 B.S.) by former migrants from the Manang-Bhot area who settled in the Kathmandu Valley. This *kidu* has two primary functions: on the one hand, it was intended to provide help, especially monetary donations, to the villagers, who remained in Manang-Bhot, and on the other hand, it was established as a cultural centre for migrants from different village areas who would otherwise live cut off from the wider Manange community. To focus community activities a gompa was build in the neighbourhood of Swayambhunāth with the

combined help of migrants from different village areas of Manang-Bhot. Their sense of individuality is kept alive as well, since besides the annual meetings of the *kidu* organization, there are ceremonial and festival occasions, when only communities of migrants from same villages meet. While the *kidu* system is referred to separately from credit relations, which are called *dhukor*¹¹, both systems, though established with different intentions, seem each in its own way to cater to -the notion of redistribution, as will be explained at some length. In contrast to these traditional fund and credit raising institutions, modern private and group credit relations seemingly are turning away from ideals of redistribution.

Since the founding units of the Manange *kidu* are made up of people related to different village-areas, we will consider their ritual cohesion first. As among other Tibetan-oriented groups, such as the Sherpas or the Khatsara Newars, ceremonial occasions within the life cycle are as important for the households' relations towards their kin and affinal relatives as they are towards the community at large. In some communities life-cycle rites¹² comprise thus not only birth, marriage and mortuary rites, but also the establishment of a new household. At all these events formal gifts are presented, which are usually called *nor bin* (Man.), that is 'to send wealth'. Among the migrants from the village of Ngawal, however, they are called *shebden*, in the case of birth rites, establishment of a household and death rites, and *bartar and balegyepa* at the marriage rites for groom and bride respectively. These gifts are formal in the sense that they are recorded in a book and are expected to be reciprocated at one of the donors events, if possible with some overtopping.

The former village communities meet annually, around April, for the *yerdung* picnic. These meetings are carried out separately from other migrant groups of the Manang area. There are, for example, at one meeting members of about one hundred households from the village of Ngawal, who gather on a hill at Godavari. The picnic events are organized by four to five representatives, called *nandi* (Man.), who are chosen in rotation so that all household heads will share in carrying out this duty. At these meetings the main social ritual consists in a contest of arrow-shooting, called *mica khelne*, and there is also a lot of card playing. Every arrow of the shooting contest is bet for with money. The *nandi* of the next year's meeting will then receive 30 % of the proceed-, from arrow-shooting and 15 % of those from card playing to spend for organizing the next *yerdung* picnic. About 15 members of the village community (Tib. *tsogpa*) are also selected at these annual meetings and have ceremonial scarfs (Tib. *khatag*) presented to them, and it is they who watch over the expenses and surplus income of the community. They will also collect fines (Nep. *jarivāna*) from those

households who were not able to attend the picnic¹³. In addition, they also receive money from a new household, that is, in cases where a newly married couple live apart from their parents¹⁴. The surplus from all these collections will be spent for the villages in the Manang area and for the gompa in Swayambhu. If they have no need to disburse this money immediately, then they will give it to persons of wealth, who invest it and pay interest to the organization, that is, the *kidu* organization. Depending on the size of the village in the Manang area, two or more delegates then gather together in the *kidu* meeting with the delegates of the other former village communities to discuss the proposed uses of the collected contributions. Again, they have to report their ongoing activities to the assemblies of the former village communities, and only after these agree to the *kidu* plans, may the implementation take place.

Aside from the aforementioned contributions there are also voluntary donations (Man. *longpa*), collected at two other ceremonial events, the "small" *nyungne*, a rite of atonement (cf. Ortner 1978) carried out after the Hindu festival of Dasain at the time of the Tihar festival (around September/October), and at the "big" *nyungne* during the festival of Buddhajayanti, held in commemoration of the Buddha's birthday and, at the same time, his entrance into Nirvana. Once a year, then, the official members of the *kidu* in particular gather at the Manang gompa in Swayambhu. There these *adekche* hand over the collected money to the elected officials (Man. *mithyepa*) of the Manang villages, who have come to Kathmandu for this purpose. The officials of the Manang *kidu* are elected to two-year terms, and those of the villages in Manang-Bhot, as representatives of the Village Development Committees (VDC), to four-year ones¹⁵. While the primary focus of the donations turned over to the village representatives has until now been on helping poor households of the Manang area, future plans for educational support are also under consideration.

If we take a look now at the credit relations of the Manang, we will find that, as far as their traditional systems of credit are concerned, there is scope for the incorporation of values that seem otherwise be bound to social help-networks. There are two ways of providing credit, one through group involvement, and the other by means of individual creditors.

In the Manang *dhukor* system the credit is provided through group involvement. Someone in need of money may approach a rich person to be his *jamānī* (Nep.) the guarantor of the loan in case the debtor is not able to repay. The potential debtor has to explain his bad fortune to that person, and if the *jamānī* agrees to help him (i. e. if he can find no fault with the story), he will say: "*dhukuṭi garau*" (Nep., 'let's make a fund collection, or

treasure')¹⁶ and a date will be fixed. About two weeks before this date the debtor, who is now called the *dhukuṭiko gulti* ('one who starts the fund collection'), will visit his prospective creditors, called *dhukuṭiko sāhū*, with bottles of home-made beer (Tib. *chang*, Man. *phyi*) to request their help. He may visit up to a hundred of his friends, some of whom may not be able to help out with credit, but are supposed nevertheless to give a small contribution "for free" (Nep. *sittai cha*). On the day of the *dhukuṭi*, then, all those who have agreed to participate will be invited to the house of the *jamānī*. The creditors will ask the *jamānī* whether he will guarantee repayment of the loan, and consultations will be held over how much the equal shares will be. At least 5,000 NR is expected to be provided by each creditor, and at most 25,000 NR, depending on what the debtor is capable of repaying. If any of the creditors cannot come up with the amount of his share, tradition dictates that he contributes an amount between 1,000 and 5,000 NR "for fee". As to the terms of repayment of the loan there are two systems: one is according to *kirti* (Nep., 'honour', whereby the credit is given for a period of five to seven years, all creditors thereafter being invited to a gathering at the house of the *jamānī*, the invitations and all services being attended to, however, by the debtor himself. The other way is according to the *dhukuṭi* formula, in one-monthly, two-monthly or six-monthly repayments of shares, the order being fixed through a lottery (Nep. *number tipa*) at the start of the fund collection. Since these systems of providing and repaying credit do not customarily involve payments of interest, either way is thus of benefit to the debtor, while the risk for creditors is minimized by the liability of the guarantor.

In what the Mananges call the "Kathmandu" *dhukuṭi*, however, the risks taken by the individual participants are much higher. While in the original *dhukuṭi* formula, that of the Gurung *dhukur* (see Messerschmidt 1978) and, clearly also, of the Manange *dhukor* systems, guarantors are liable until the end of the fund rotation or fund repayment, in the aberrant forms current in Kathmandu there is no such provision. These kinds of gambling credit systems, though forbidden nowadays, were widely in use a few years ago in Kathmandu among people of different cultural backgrounds. However, they were prone to a lot of internal conflict, since some people just ran away after taking their turn in the fund, leaving the others in the lurch.

In one kind of these rotational funds, where each participant once receives the fund (mostly in monthly rotation), only the one who starts the *dhukuti* has to provide a guarantor for his turn-by-turn increments, whereas the other "players" do not need to. Every participant has to pay an equal share or increment at the beginning, the henceforth fixed amount of the fund being given to the initiator. In the next round a one-time secret bidding decides

who will receive the fixed amount first and the order of the rotation: each player writes a bid for the fund, and the winner must deduct his bid from the total fixed amount. Thus the shares the members pay start low and rise round by round. At some point the value of the shares will rise above their initial value. The one who takes the fund the last will gain the most profit from it, while the one who takes it second will have to pay somewhat more than the others.

Another version of the "Kathmandu" *dhukuti* consists in a lottery system, the procedure for which is somewhat similar to the aforementioned bidding system, the difference being that the bidding begins in the first round and each winner has to announce a guarantor for his further payment of the shares once he has received the fund. As in the former system, the winner can only once take the fund. The secret bidding here, however, is done in every round. The system is obviously more secure. However, it has moved away from the original idea of *dhukutis* to help those in need.

A similar contrast between traditional and modern forms of informal credit systems can be observed for private credit relations. Whereas among the Manages, the former are built on mutual trust and a balanced long-term reciprocity between debtor and creditor, the latter are subjected to standards of anonymity. Credit relations with people from a different cultural background obviously involve collateral and mortgages. Also, the steeper interest rates undoubtedly reflect the fact that the risk taken by a private creditor is much higher when dealing with people of a different cultural background. On the other hand, there seems to be less constraint in taking profit from people of other cultural origins.

In the Manang-Bhot area, according to informants, if someone is in need of private credit (unless he has had some misfortune - in which case there is the possibility to start a *dhukor*), he could go to a *sāhū* (a rich man), offer him homemade beer (*chang* or *phyi*) and ask for future credit. If the *sāhū* agrees, then one has to work for him first, in particular, work his fields during the spring and summer season. When winter draws near, one can then receive credit, the amount being between 10,000 - 30,000 NR. These credits are used by villagers mostly for petty trade from India to Nepal. The interest is already discharged by the work the debtor provided in advance, in which sense it is called *khe lagpa* (Man., 'profit from hands'). Thus at the time the credit is repaid there is no further demand for interest. But even if no work was provided in advance, interest rates (in the village) would not amount to more than 5 - 10 % a year.

In contrast to these traditional terms, there also exist private informal credit relations between people of different cultural origin, and to some extent also within the community of Kathmandu-based Manages. One

distinguishing feature is the necessity of providing collateral (Nep. *dhito*). While the interest rates of the commercial banks will amount to approximately 16 - 22 % annually, and those for credits taken from financial companies from 19 - 29 %, the interest rates for informal credits may rise to between 24 and 36 % annually, sometimes even more, but they enjoy no legal backing. In the latter case, the interest (Nep. *byāj*) has to be paid monthly at rates of up to 3 %. If collateral is taken, this may be done in the following way: someone who wants to buy a taxi, for example, will have to register it in the name of the creditor until the loan is repaid. The procedure is therefore similar to that of a bank. Only for *bishwāsilo mānche* (Nep., 'trustworthy people') will the creditor give a loan without collateral, even though there are still high monthly interest rates. According to one informant 80 % of all given loans are returned with interest, while some people will return only the principal. Still, this informal way of taking credits seems to be widespread in Nepal at large, because the complications of access to formal credits that common people have to deal with seem to be more of a constraint for them than the high interest rates of informal credit relations.

It may be concluded from these differing aspects of traditional and modern credit and help relations among or involving migrants from the Manang area that there are cultural boundaries that help to sustain support for people of one's own culture. One important aspect of these internal relations, as evident from both *kidu* and traditional *dukhori* relations, is the high degree of control that exists aside from the emphasis on mutual trust. While such credit practices as documented by the *dukhori* system in order to help people who have fallen on bad times would not be possible without mutual trust, and even though redistribution is given primacy in many ways, ceremonial and social, there always exists a level of control beyond. In the *kidu* system there are the *nandi* and the other officiating members, who collect funds and hand them over to the *kidu* organization, while in the *dhukori* system there are the *jamānīs*, the guarantors who act as sponsors to the credit raising. The way of 'honour' and 'glory' is thus controlled at a level beyond trust. Likewise the traditional relation between private creditor and debtor is initiated by a bond of trust, the request for help by offering *chang* or *phyi*, but this bond for trust and creditability has to be sustained by the work given in advance as interest on the credit itself. Thus what we find among the Mananges is a balancing of trust and reciprocity, or as the common Newars in their *guthi* organizations would say, *iman-jaman mānche cahincha* (Nep., 'we need people who prove by their acts what they say'), but this would lead us further afield.

Conclusions

In this look at the internal relations of the *kidus* of Khatsara Newars and migrants from the Manange area with special emphasis on fund-raising and credit, various features have been discerned. While both groups are basically oriented towards helping people from a common local origin, in the organizational form among the Khatsara Newar, the level of control is slight compared to that of the Mananges. Two aspects of social structure intermingle here indirectly. First, leadership within mutual help groups also has a political significance - a legitimate expectation in Tibetan-oriented local communities (cf. Ronge 1978:135). Thus among the Khatsara Newars the leader of the *kidu* also acts as mediator in legal affairs or in applications for citizenship (the current leader is in fact a politician also), while among the Mananges the *kidu* representatives act directly with the village representatives of the VDCs from Manang Bhot. Thus leadership is necessarily free from the rotational practices as found in most of the common Newar *guthi* systems¹⁷. Second, the preference for the joint extended family system of the Newars (Lewis 1995:50), on the one hand, that seems to be one adopted feature of the Khatsara Newars extending into their business practices, and the preference for a diversification of income-generating possibilities among Tibetan-oriented groups on the other hand (cf. Zivetz 1992, Mühlich 1996), have parallels in the respective attitudes of Khatsara and Manange *kidu* members in regard to social control. In the case of the Khatsara Newars, the *kidu* is conceived as an 'extended family', social control being only necessary at the top of the system, but beyond that relations of mutual trust, sustained by long-term ritual relations, seem sufficient. In the *kidu* system of the Mananges, on the other hand, social control exists within ritual relations, thus being active at all levels of the system. Diversified interests obviously tend to necessitate mutual social control (from an ideal perspective as well). Credit relations, whether undertaken through group involvement or privately, reflect this: among the Khatsara Newars as among the Mananges, the collateral necessary for formal credit relations is replaced by a long-term ritual reciprocity of people, who are trustworthy in each other's eyes. While slight social control seems sufficient to the former, the latter also make use of the possibility of substituting work given in advance for interest payments, as one example. The interest is relatively reasonable as long as the credit is being extended to within one's own ethnic group or within the original cultural setting. In both systems described above the repayment of loans is guaranteed through social bonds pure and simple.

Notes

1. Minister of Finance, R. N. Sharma, in his budget speech (H.M.G. 1997:1 1).
2. For a concise overview of other traditional systems of mutual help and credit refer to D. A. Messerschmidt (1995), for case studies refer to L. Caplan (1972) and P. Sagant (1996), for example.
3. This paper is part of a broader study concerning credit relations and urban development in Nepal, made possible with the help of a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.
4. The recognition of the Khatsara Newars as an independent group, differing from other Newars in particular, is related to their adoption of Tibetan religious traditions and cultural values (cf. T. Lewis 1995:48 n. 18, 50). Their independent position might have been enhanced by their favourable relationships to the Chinese as well as the Nepalese authorities, since the educated among them were entrusted to keep up ties of trade between Lhasa and Kathmandu after the occupation of Tibet and the subsequent closure of the borders (cf. Bista 1979:144).
5. This terminology may suggest, that until now women have not been proposed to fill such offices, though they do contribute a lot to the labour exchange within the Khatsara *kidu*.
6. The provision in the constitution regarding the term of office for elected members was recently changed from three years to five years. Already before that the former president of the organization had been in office for a ten-year period. Actually there are no new elections as long as there is no candidate opposing the current leader.
7. The officials say that only well-to-do people contribute money to the *kidu*, while all other people primarily give work.
8. The monthly income generated through rent made it possible to extend help relations. In the long vacation (around Dasain) the house is used for the celebration of marriages.
9. As of this writing (1997) the *kidu* was still in possession of some excess money, most of which can be drawn upon by members as loans with an interest of up to 2.5 % per month. There is, however, no compound interest (see below) on these loans, if the debtor is not able to repay in time. Some interest payments remain even outstanding with the promise that they will be discharged at the time of the repayment of the principal.
10. Compound interest (Nep. *syāj*) is the interest on the principal plus the interest on the accumulated outstanding interest debt. To give a simple example: if someone has taken a loan of 1000 NR to be repaid after one year at an annual interest of 100 NR, then, in case he is not

able to repay the loan after one year, the accrued (compound) interest would be charged on the total sum of 1100 NR for the following year. If, by contrast, the *kidu* organization gives a loan to a private person, then there is no such rule. As one member said: "The *kidu* does not want to apply pressure by giving way to such rules; they (the organizing members) just say when they want the money back."

11. Compare the Gurung term *dhikur* for rotating credit associations (Messerschmidt 1978).
12. There are no direct equivalents of initiation rites, leading from childhood to adolescence or thence to maturity, among people of Tibetan-oriented cultures. There are, however, initiation rites for the different grades within the monastic order. The establishment and inauguration of a new household for its part may be considered somehow equivalent to initiation rites, since these concern people's public position, and in this case the position of the new householder couple as full members of the community.
13. The fine is currently (1996-97) fixed at 500 NR for men and 300 NR for women.
14. The informant gave a fixed sum of 5,000 NR for this contribution. The mandatory nature of this contribution suggests the need to include the "initiation" of a new household into the wider community among the life-cycle rites.
15. According to one informant, women have been elected to secondary positions (Nep. *upādyekche*) of both organizational forms.
16. The procedure is somewhat parallel to that of fund-raising for the less fortunate members of the Khatsara kidu, though the *kidu* does not have a special term for this kind of help.
17. Rotational practices of leadership, based on seniority in case of the *thakāli* ('elders') and yearly turns in case of the *pālā* ('feast organizers'), are prevalent among most of the Newari *guthi*'s, except in the *deslā guthi* (*guthi* of the locality'). Among the Citrakar in Bhaktapur, for example, leadership is given to the most able craftsman, who is chosen by the five oldest painters (Toffin 1995:253), and "who has a monopoly over all the most important contracts for a certain period" (1995:254), being the "appointed intermediary between the Citrakars... and the central authorities" of the government (1995:255). Also in other locality based *guthis* of different Newar communities, like that of the Naradevi Tulādhār (merchants), "young activists gained the approval of the caste elders... (to) make modern investments with *guthi* funds, and pursue programmes of community uplift for their poorer members" (Lewis 1995:52-53).

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KĀMI (BLACKSMITHS) TODAY: FORESTS AND LIVELIHOOD SECURITY

Elvira Graner

Innumerable studies about Nepal have pointed out the severe degradation of forests in the country (Robbe 1954; Willan 1967; Eckholm 1975, 1976; Bajracharya 1983; Messerli & Ives 1991; Joshi 1994, to name only a few). Some of these studies have gone one step further and have included aspects of utilisation and have looked at the impact of degradation upon the local population. At the same time there is a vast body of studies on (environmental) policies, which also, or primarily, include issues of implementation and impact of these policies. Yet only a few studies have focused upon analysing different social groups and upon differentiating the impact that either forest degradation or the implementation of (environmental) policies have upon these different social groups, and upon their working and living conditions. One of these studies was undertaken in Sindhupalchok district (Central Development Zone), monitoring the implementation of the recent forest policy by analysing the composition of forest user groups and access to forest products by members and non-members of these groups (Graner 1996). The aim of the study was to assess whether or not it is primarily people from "poor sections of society" who are included in these groups, as is suggested by the Forestry Master Plan.

The notion of dependence upon forests and forest products is prevalent in almost all studies which analyse rural livelihood systems (as pinpointed by Joshi 1994: i). All rural households heavily depend upon access to forests and forest products, such as fodder for feeding livestock, which forms an important component of rural subsistence; for firewood in order to process food; and for timber, needed for the construction of houses but also for agricultural tools, as for instance ploughs. Yet there is one group from the occupational castes who rely upon access to forest products not only for their household consumption but also for performing their traditional occupation, namely *Kāmi* (blacksmiths). Charcoal, besides iron, is the major input needed for the performance of their traditional occupation and is customarily made by the *Kāmi* themselves. Thus forests are a most vital

resource for them and access to forests determines whether or not they are able to perform their traditional occupation.

The study mentioned above has undertaken several case studies in two areas of the Melamchi Khola region in Western Sindhupalchok, in Kiul VDC (High Mountains) and in Melamchi VDC (Middle Mountains) in 1992–94. The present paper will present one of these case studies undertaken on *Kāmi* from Kiul VDC, in order to illustrate the vital role access to forest has for their traditional occupation. Traditionally there were plenty of forests where they could go to, either near to their settlements or at higher altitudes in Kiul VDC (about 2000–2800 m) or in the northern neighbouring Timbughyangyl VDC. During the last decades access to forests has become increasingly restricted, as pressure upon them for both firewood and fodder is high and the high demands of firewood needed in order to make charcoal impose an additional and often rejected stress upon the forests. At higher altitudes access has not been restricted for a long time but when Langtang National Park was established in 1978 and came to include the northern Helambu area legal access became extremely restricted. This control was physically experienced by two *Kāmi* who when making charcoal north of Shermatang in 1985 were caught by rangers, had their charcoal confiscated and were detained for one night.

To the south there is a forest which was one of the first in Sindhupalchok district handed over to a user group (DFO, Operational Plan # 12). This user group comprises of Brahmin, Chhetri and Tamang households, but does not include any members from the *Kāmi*. Membership was based upon traditional rights and utilisation patterns and because the *Kāmi* had no such traditional rights to this forest they were not included in the user group.

As an introduction this paper will give a short summary of the recent forest policy, in order to make the study comprehensible for those who are less familiar with this topic. It will proceed to give a short framework for access to forests and forest products. The main part of the paper will concentrate on *Kāmi* and their traditional work and clientele. In its last chapter it will assess the impact of the recent forest policy upon this group, as was encountered in the case study.

Contemporary Forest Policies in Nepal: A Short Introduction

The forest legislation of the 1960s was primarily aimed at protecting forests "against" the utilisation of the local population. This policy was substantially modified during the late 1970s when the Panchayat Forest and Panchayat Protected Forest Rules (HMG/ML&J 1978) were formulated and again in the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (HMG et al. 1988). The latter incorporated the idea of user group management prevalent in the

decentralisation policy of the early 1980s (HMG/ML&J 1982), then introduced as the main means of (participatory) development. This new policy line aimed at a wide public participation by handing over all accessible forests to user groups, rather than to political bodies as was done before, in order to promote management and utilisation. Later on, these recommendations have been legislatively backed by the new Forest Act (HMG/MLJ&PA 1993a) which repealed the previous laws, the Forest Act (HMG/ML&J 1961) and Forest Protection (Special Arrangement) Act (HMG/ML&J 1967)(for details see Graner 1996).

Besides the recognition of the need for public participation both Master Plan and the Forest Act also took up broader aims of development policies, such as the commitment to secure basic needs, as laid down in the Basic Needs Fulfillment Programme of 1985 (HMG/NPC 1987). There, basic needs were quantified in terms of five main indicators, i.e. food, clothes, housing, education, and health but also qualified in terms of "security", by addressing the need for guaranteeing "smooth supplies of essential commodities as rice, pulses, sugar, firewood, salt, kerosene, &c" (ibid.:36). The latter, especially the need for firewood, is increasingly recognised and repeatedly stated as an issue of security of basic needs (Seventh Five-Year Plan: HMG & al 1985:36; Eighth Five Year Plan: HMG et al. 1992:41; Dhakal 1993:2), and also as the first issue of the policy objectives of the Forestry Master Plan:

- satisfaction of basic needs (for fuelwood, timber, fodder);
- sustainable utilisation of forest resources;
- participation in decision-making and sharing of benefits; and
- socio-economic growth (HMG/ADB/FINNIDA 1988a: 8/9).

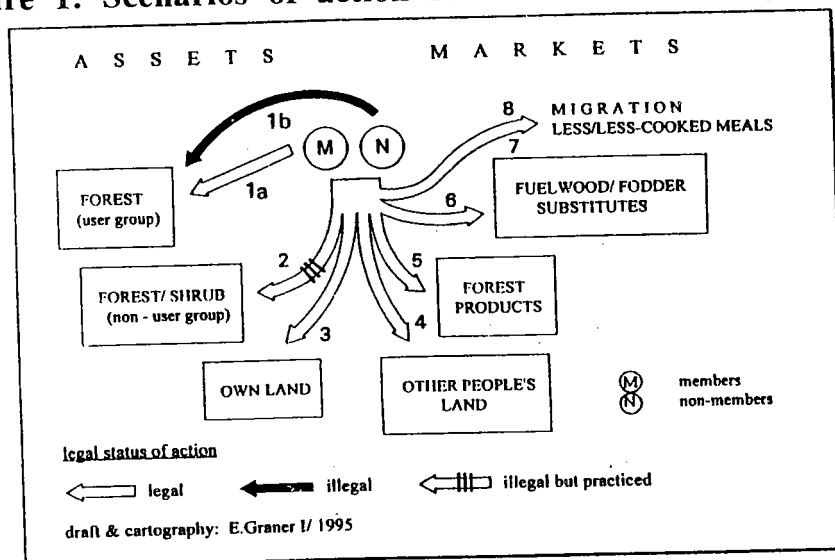
The chapters elaborating on these four issues include several statements of further interest. One is the assumption that through the effective conservation and utilisation of forests at the local level, it is possible to "fulfil a number of multi-faceted economic necessities of the nation - fuelwood to cook food; charcoal and raw material to keep the industries running; timber to build houses; fodder for animal husbandry" (ibid.: 4). Another one is that on a national level "the multitudes contribution from the forestry sector must be channelled in ways which provide maximum benefits to both the local and the national economies. Special attention must be paid to the poorest segments of society" (ibid.). These concerns about the securement of basic needs and the commitment to pay "special attention" to the poor are again taken up in the "Forestry Sector Policy" (ibid. 1988b) which states that "Priority will be given to poorer communities, or to the poorer people in a community" (ibid.: 10).

According to the recent Forest Act (HMG/MLJ&PA 1993) these objectives are to be achieved by organising the population into forest user groups, defined as "the concerned users of a forest desirous of developing and conserving it and using the forest products for collective benefit. [They] may form a user group and apply for registration to the District Forest Office" (ibid.: Chapter 9/41-42). After this formal registration the members of the user groups are granted legal access to utilise forests. On the other hand, non-members are effectively excluded from access to these forests, a restriction implemented by the members of user groups far more strictly than before under ("blind eye") HMG protection. Therefore membership within such a group has become an extremely crucial issue as it not only determines legal access to forests but in case of exclusion from membership implies losing actual access at the same time.

Access to Forest Products: A Framework for Analysis

In conceptualising access to forest products one has to distinguish various potential sources, both public and private ones ("assets", in Swift's terminology; see Figure 1). Public resources are mainly forests or shrub areas, and access has traditionally always been a local right, yet one which was legally withdrawn (yet practised) during the 1960s and early 1970s. This access may now again be obtained, when user groups are formed and registered. Private sources are mainly one's own land or other people's land. In addition, supply may exist through markets, both for firewood or firewood substitutes, a type of access which is becoming of increasing importance to some groups.

Figure 1: Scenarios of action for access to forest products



Yet it is an important feature to recognise that in highly-stratified societies with unequal access to productive resources "scenarios of action" are likely to be different for different sections. Whereas some groups can easily supply their needs from either private land or from markets, others may not be in a position to do so. Thus public "common property" forests and shrub areas (not in a legal but in a matter-of-fact sense) are likely to play a different role for different sections of society. Whereas for the former group it may not make any difference whether they are excluded from access to communal resources or not, for the latter, who are not in a position to secure their needs by relying on their own resources and who heavily depend on access to communal resources, it will make a significant difference if they are cut off from these resources.

The recent forest policy, as laid down in the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (HMG et al. 1988) and the Forest Act (HMG/MLJ&PA 1993), aims at modifying these "scenarios of action" by handing over all accessible forest to user groups and by allowing the members of these groups to utilise (a part of) these forests (see Figure 1; 1a). Utilisation is to be carried out in ways regulated by the operational plan set up in co-operation of the members of the user group and staff of the respective District Forest Office (DFO). At the same time it is the stated objective of the Forestry Master Plan to "secure basic needs", presumably to "the needy".

Yet this commitment is severely challenged by the fact that there is no unlimited scope for forming these groups as both the availability of forests and their sustainable utilisation are extremely limiting factors, especially in densely populated and/or scarcely forested areas of Middle Mountain Valleys but also in some High Mountain Valleys. If there are not sufficient forests to secure sustainable utilisation for the total population, then access necessarily will either have to be restricted for all people or only be permitted for a limited number of people who can "sustainably" utilise the forest. Thus the assumption that especially lower income groups will benefit from the new approach may be a noble intention but at the same time extremely difficult to achieve.

The *Kāmi* of Kiul VDC

In Kiul VDC there is a total of 37 *Kāmi* households, accounting for 4.1% of the total population, i.e. a percentage similar to the district average of Sindhupalchok (3.7 %; HMG/ NPC/ CBS 1993). Most of these households (27) live in Ward 5, where one hamlet is located at an altitude of about 1050–1100 m and a second one at an altitude of about 1500 m, just below a Yolmo-(Sherpa) settlement. Yet, today only 12 *Kāmi* households from Ward 5 (44%) still work in their traditional occupation, sharing a total of 7 smithies, usually among several brothers.

There are no family histories on when the *Kāmi* migrated to this area and where they originally came from. Most likely they migrated in association with the Brahmins, who live close by, and received some land in order to secure their subsistence needs in return for the services rendered to the Brahmins. Their clientele, the so-called *bista*¹, the Nepalese equivalent of the Indian *jajmani*-system, comprise not only of Brahmins but also Tamang, Chhetris, Magar and *Damāi* (tailors), all local residents, as well as Yolmo-(Sherpa) from villages at high-altitudes and northern areas. The *Kāmi*'s duties are to make new agricultural tools, like *khukuri* (long knives), *hassia* (sickles), *kodāli* and *kodale* (small spades) and *phāli* (iron part of ploughs) and to repair and to sharpen old tools whenever needed by their clientele (for details of work performance see Höfer 1972; 1976). These items are manufactured at a smithy (*aran*), which is often shared by several brothers. Services are usually rendered once or twice a year for a total of about three days, especially before the *dasai* festival in mid October.

In return for their services the *Kāmi* receive an annual wage, usually paid in kind, the so-called *bāli* ("harvest"), comprising of a small share of their clientele's grain production, the so-called *bhāg* ("share"). This is received for several types of grain, maize (*makkaiko bhāg*) and/or millet (*kodoko bhāg*) but also for paddy, the so-called *kalla bhāg* (share received at the threshing place for paddy). In addition to these payments *bista*-households give extra food to their *Kāmi* at the main Hindu festivals (*dasai*, *tihār* and *māgh sakrānti*), either in form of rice or flour, and at *dasai* there is the custom of giving them the neck of the *khasi* (male goat). Besides these annual payments the *bista*-system traditionally incorporated elements of social security as the *Kāmi* usually approached their *bista*-households in times of food and cash scarcity. Thus the *bista*-system at one hand guarantees a certain minimum of both labour opportunities and food but on the other hand also implies a high degree of dependence and stagnation. Besides, the clientele needs to be divided among the sons after the father's death, which often minimises clientele substantially, especially when there are more than three or four sons.

Today most *Kāmi* households, along with other occupational castes, are one of the poorest communities of the area. Only a few *Kāmi* still work in their traditional occupation whereas all others support themselves by agriculture and by additional wage labour. But local labour markets are limited mainly to low-wage *khetālā* (agricultural labour) and scarce portering opportunities. Development policies have only affected some of the households, mainly those with a relatively high access to land who have stopped working as *Kāmi* some time ago. Thus it is a prevalent feature that those households are much better off who do not work as *Kāmi*, whereas

most households who still work as *Kāmi* often have difficulties to secure their subsistence. Asked for the main limitation for working in their traditional occupation the immediate answer is that it has become increasingly difficult to find firewood in order to make the charcoal needed for their work, due to heavy restrictions imposed on the cutting of firewood. This situation was not altered when a forest user group was formed and registered for a close-by forest, as none of the *Kāmi* households was included as a member. Only one or two *Kāmi* profit indirectly as they have better access to firewood for charcoal via some members of the user group who are within their *bista*.

***Kāmi* workshops and their clientele (*bista*)**

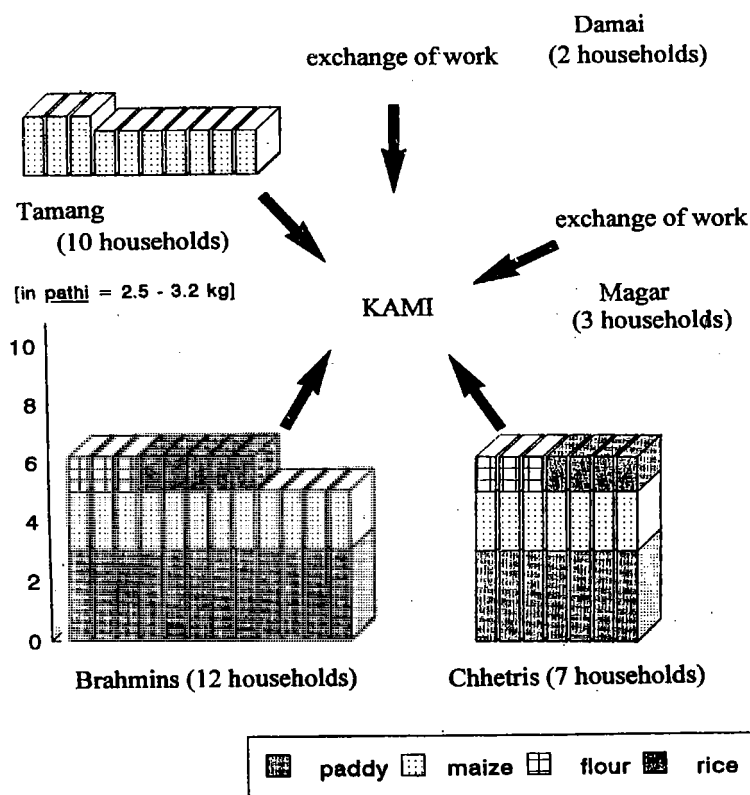
In ward 5 of Kiul VDC there are five smithies where *Kāmi* still regularly work for their clientele (*bista*). Two others exist where *Kāmi* repair or sharpen old tools or occasionally even make new tools. Yet most of them have stopped to perform regular *bista* services. Today most of the *bista* comprise of about 20–40 *bista*-households, whereas some are smaller. Sizes are thus similar to the ones reported by Euler (1984: 80) for Kabrepalanchok district (20–30 households). On the other hand Höfer (1976) reports for his study area (Western or Central Nepal) that *bista* comprise of 5–95 households (ibid.: 355), similarly Bouillier (1977: 104) for Kabrepalanchok, where sizes of *bista* are also 20–100 households.

Bista relationship is close to barter economy as annual wages are usually paid in kind (*bāli*) rather than in cash and changes over the past decades have been minimal². The share of grain received is about 1–3 *pāthi* (about 2.5–3 kg per *pāthi*) per crop, but usually only one or two types of grain are handed over, amounting to about 2–5 *pāthi* (5–15 kg). Yet information given on annual wages varies strongly whether it is given by the *Kāmi* or by their clientele, as some Brahmins claim that they give more than 10 *pāthi* (25–30 kg)³. Arrangements are slightly different for the *Kāmi* at higher altitudes who mainly render their services to *bista*-households of Tamang, Yolmo-(Sherpa) and Lama communities located at high-altitude regions where cropping patterns are different. These households give either millet and maize, in quantities of about 4 *pāthi* each, or about 8–10 *pathi* of potatoes.

Out of 12 *Kāmi* households of Kiul VDC (Ward #5) who still perform their traditional occupation (see Graner 1996) *bista* relations of one *Kāmi* household will be given in order to exemplify contemporary conditions for *bāli* (annual wage) received (see Figure 2). This *bista* comprises of 34 households, mainly Brahmins (12 households) and Chhetris (7 households) but also some Tamang, *Damāi* (tailor) and a few Magar households. The

payments in kind are made according to the households' production, and as most Tamang are similarly grain-deficit they only have to hand over 1.75 – 2 *pāthi* of maize, whereas Brahmins and Chhetris have to give 3 *pāthi* of paddy (7.5 kg, equivalent to about 5.1 kg of rice) and also 2 *pāthi* of maize (about 6.2 kg). At festivals some *bista* households additionally have to give 3/4 – 1 *mana* of either (wheat) flour or rice (about 0.425 kg rice). These payments in kind given by all *bista*-households amount to about 3 *muri* of paddy (about 100 kg of rice)⁴ and 2.85 *muri* of maize. Thus the total amount of grain (110 *pāthi*) received as *bāli* is only slightly lower than in Euler's (1984) study, who mentions 120 *pāthi* (ibid.: 88). Other groups, such as occupational castes, in this case *Damāi* (tailors) from the neighbouring Ichok VDC, do not hand over grain but exchange labour services whenever needed. The same applies to three Magar households who also exchange labour needed by the *Kāmi* for either construction work, as for instance the changing of the straw-roof, or when trees have to be cut for the making for charcoal.

Fig. 2: *Bista*-arrangements for *kāmi* workshop in Kiul



Source: Field data 1993/94

Graphic: Graner V/1995 (following Bronger 1986)

Inputs and Interlinkages to Market Economy

Interlinkages to the market economy occur when charcoal or iron for new tools are needed. Iron for new tools usually has to be provided by the customers who when ordering new tools first consult the *Kāmi* on quantities of iron needed. They then provide about double the amount needed for their tools as a sort of additional in-kind payment, along with a small payment in grain of usually 1 *pāthi* (2.5–3 kg). This system guarantees that the *bista*-households rather than the *Kāmi* are subject to changes of market conditions. Prices of iron have risen about 50% during the last decade (see Table 1), i.e. are only slightly higher than general inflation.

The second major input needed for the *Kāmi* is charcoal. Whereas traditionally there were plenty of forests where charcoal could be made, today the main (legal) source of making charcoal for most *Kāmi* is the purchasing of firewood, either from registered forest user groups or from private sources. If available from forest user groups costs are rather nominal (1–5 Rs/*bhāri*; about 30–40 kg) whereas if purchased from private sources prices are generally significantly higher (10–15 Rs/*bhāri*), although much lower than at Melamchi Bazar, where rates have increased to about 40–70 Rs/ *bhari* by November 1994 (see Graner 1996). As a minimum of 8 *bhāri* is needed in order to produce 1 *bhāri* of charcoal and the workshops need an annual minimum of about 10–12 *bhāri* of charcoal annual expenditure on charcoal may well be 1,000–1,500 Rs. Prices have risen exorbitantly (i.e. 8–10 fold) during the last decade (see Table 1) and demand significant financial inputs. Whereas price fluctuations of iron are usually buffered by the *bista*-households, prices for firewood and charcoal are not. Thus the scarcity of firewood affects *Kāmi* households and their work more than anybody else.

Table 1: Market prices for iron and charcoal (1973 - 1993)

INPUTS	1973	1983	1993
iron [Rs/ <i>dhāmi</i>]	30 - 35	40 - 43	60 - 72
iron [Rs/kg]	12 - 14	16 - 17.20	24 - 28.80
charcoal [Rs/ <i>bhāri</i>]	8 - 16	24 - 40	80 - 120

source: *Kāmi* from Kiul VDC

Alternative Sources of Securing Subsistence Needs

In terms of subsistence needs the quantities of grain received as *bāli* (110 *pāthi* = 5.5 *muri*) are sufficient for the annual food requirements of about one adult whereas for households of 3 to 4 adults (or two adults and several children), it is sufficient for 3 or 4 months. Thus there arises the urgent

need to supplement in-kind incomes from the traditional occupation by other sources. As the household analysed above does not own any agricultural land grain can only be obtained from *khet* and *bāri* fields cultivated as tenants under *kut/adhiyā* arrangements where about 50% of the main produce has to be handed over to the respective land owner or *guthi*-temple. The share that remains to this particular household are a total of 17 *muri*, comprising of 5 *muri* of paddy, 4 *muri* of wheat and 8 *muri* of maize and millet.

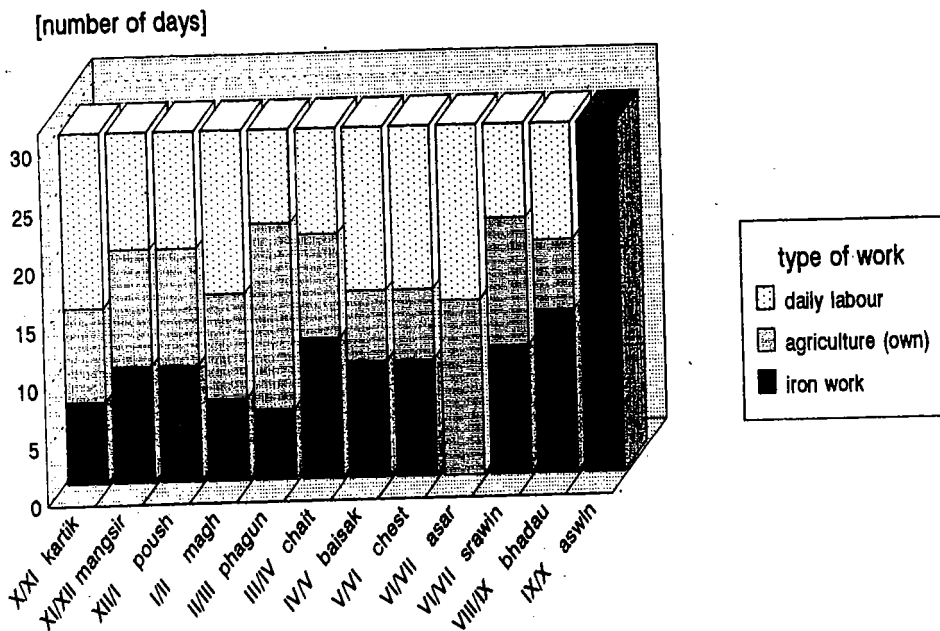
This calculation reveals that only a comparatively small share of the annual subsistence needs are secured by in-kind incomes from their traditional occupation whereas far more is derived from agriculture on rent-in fields. Yet this implies a substantial input in time, a pattern which is reflected in the monthly working calendar of this *Kāmi* (see Figure 3). Yet, although these annual incomes in kind seem to be fairly low on first sight, it is an important source of household food supply especially for paddy. This is especially important as most of the paddy production from rent-in fields has to be handed over as in-kind interest rates to creditors.

On the other hand it is also apparent that this household can not secure its subsistence needs, neither from the traditional occupation nor from their agricultural production, a condition which applies for many *Kāmi* households, whether still active in their traditional occupation or not. Thus, most of them have at least some family members who work as daily wage labourers, mainly in agriculture. Some men have traditionally worked as porters, especially for villagers from high altitude or northern areas where portering demands are extraordinarily high, due to the fact that most of the food has to be brought into these villages from other, higher-productive regions. Besides, both men and women usually work as agricultural labourers, the same applies to children, who are generally included into the labour force at a fairly young age.

The importance of daily labour in their annual labour scheme is shown for the *Kāmi* household who has been analysed above (see Figure 3). In most months daily labour is carried out for about 10 - 12 days and thus amounts to a similar time allocation as the performance of the traditional occupation. Only the month of *āswīn* (September/ October), before the *dasai* festival, is still dominated by their traditional iron work. Yet local labour markets usually have unfavourable conditions for people in need of work especially when they are indebted to the persons supplying labour opportunities. Thus, migration to either the Terai or to India is high, about one third of all males have been away or still are. Usually husbands leave their families behind, who then either live on their own or (usually) with one of the man's brothers. Most of these migrating men do not know where other villagers

are and look for their own opportunities, as stated by all. Asked whether collective search for work is not easier and possibly more successful some agree yet most of them plan to carry on on their own. At the same time, illiteracy is perceived as a strong limitation for migration, as stated by both men and women. On the other hand, it is prevalent not only in the parent generation but also among the children, irrespective of the fact that there are two primary schools in the area. Whereas about half of all children from the upper hamlet attend classes it is only one boy from the lower hamlet. Thus, chances for better qualified types of work are low also for the future.

Fig. 3: Annual working calendar of a *kāmi* (blacksmith)



Kāmi: Their Access to Forests

The present case study has shown that it is difficult for *Kāmi* households to secure annual subsistence needs for all members of the household. Arrangements for in-kind payments (*bāli*) from their clientele households (*bista*) have traditionally been low in this region and are only sufficient if *bista* are large. Thus, production from own fields is a vital component in order to meet subsistence needs. Yet, for many households access to fields mainly - or even exclusively - exists in form of tenancy, where only half of the produce accrues to the cultivator, who above all, does not hold any tenancy rights. Thus, many of the *Kāmi* households are left off with securing their subsistence by working as daily labourers and with including their children into their household's labour force at an early age.

Above all, the performance of their traditional occupation is threatened from several sides. Fuelwood for charcoal is increasingly difficult to obtain and this is a curtailment which poses a severe burden upon all *Kāmi* workshops. Whereas traditional arrangements between *Kāmi* and their clientele contribute significantly to secure household food security and also to buffer the workshops from price inflation of iron it unfortunately does not sufficiently buffer the workshops towards an increasingly restricted access to forests. In addition, this inflation of costs for charcoal is strongly opposed to the dumping costs at which substitutes for these manufactured items, mainly from Indian origin, are available at market centres. This process of substitution is in full swing in the Terai and will certainly also find its way even to the most remote areas, gradually further reducing sizes of *bista*.

In order to counteract these difficulties, the assignment of forests to *Kāmi* would be a possible strategy. Yet including *Kāmi* in forest user groups poses an extreme burden upon the other members of these groups, and one which is usually rejected. This was also the case in the present study, when a forest user group was formed for a close-by forests which comprises of Brahmin, Chhetri and Tamang, excluding all *Kāmi*. As the utilisation of the forest has not been possible for a long period of time, the formation did not affect the *Kāmi* negatively. Yet, one more potential source of access to forest products has been lost, along with a possible chance to contribute to securing access to this decisive input for a traditional occupation.

Access to Forest Products: A Framework for Analysis

In conceptualising access to forest products one has to distinguish various potential sources, both public and private ones ("assets", in Swift's terminology; see Figure 1). Public resources are mainly forests or shrub areas and access has traditionally always been a local right, yet one which was legally withdrawn (yet practised) during the 1960s and early 1970s. This access may now again be obtained, when user groups are formed and registered. Private sources are mainly one's own land or other people's land. In addition, supply may exist through markets, both for firewood or firewood substitutes, a type of access which is becoming of increasing importance to some groups.

Notes:

1. Höfer (1972) in his study on *Kāmi* in Western (Central ?) Nepal mentions that there is a (folk) etymology that the term *bista* is derived from *bis* (20), denoting that payments for *Kāmi* originally comprised of twenty different items (ibid.: 36).

2. These findings differ strongly from Bouillier who in 1977 suggested that the traditional bista system is disappearing fast in Nepal" (ibid.: 109).
3. These rates are similar to the ones mentioned by Euler (1984:80) who gives a list of 20†households who hand over 2 - 7 *pāthi* (and 13 *pāthi* in one case) as a "Kāmi bāli". On the other hand Bouillier (1977: 104) states that "rich people hand over 10 *pāthi* of paddy, 1 *pāthi* of wheat, about 4 *pāthi* of maize [i.e. one basket of maize cobs], and at *dasai* 2 *mānā* of both rice and *chiurā* (beaten rice) and about 10 kg of meat. Yet she does not give details about quantities handed over by "poor" households. The same applies to Höfer who also only mentions one uniform rate, comprising of about 4 *pāthi* of maize [one basket of maize cobs], 3 - 6 *pāthi* of millet, 1/2 *pāthi* of paddy, a handlong piece of meat (from the neck) at *dasai*, as well as snacks of dried meat, a handful of rice, salt, chilli, and beer at other festival occasions (about 6 times a year).
4. About 2.85 *muri* (57 *pathi*) are handed over in form of paddy (3 *pāthi* from 19 households) and about 0.3 *muri* (6.75 *pathi*) in form of rice (6.75 *pāthi* of paddy = 3.37 *pāthi* of rice; 0.1 - 0.125 *pāthi* from 9 households at about three festivals per year).

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INDICATORS OF BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY IN NEPALI AMONG TIBETO-BURMAN PEOPLES OF NEPAL

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The myth of bilingualism suggests that everyone in Nepal is fluent in Nepali; however, this study shows large segments of the Tibeto-Burman population are only minimally proficient in speaking and understanding Nepali.

This paper presents data on bilingual proficiency collected in 1992 and 1993 from speakers in seven different Tibeto-Burman ethnolinguistic groups in rural Nepal. Over five hundred subjects were tested, using sentence repetition tests. These data are correlated with demographic variables to show the significant indicators of Nepali proficiency among the target populations.

The results show that only well-educated subjects are comparably proficient with mother-tongue Nepali speakers. Because the same demographic factors in different areas produce parallel patterns of second-language proficiency, the most significant factors can comprise a model to substantially predict Nepali bilingualism. Based on extensive field data, these results provide a powerful tool for language policy and planning in Nepal.

Rationale

The democratic revolution in early 1990 ushered in a whole new era for language policy and planning in Nepal. Nepal's one-language policy was radically changed by the new constitution which now "guarantees the fundamental right of the individual to receive primary education in his/her mother tongue" (Yadav 1992:178).

Practically speaking, though, the difficulties of language development and the huge expense of producing basic literacy materials in dozens of minority languages make the implementation of this right a formidable task.

Only with a concerted collaborative effort between Nepalese and expatriate linguists and literacy specialists will Nepal's minority-language groups gain the recognition and advantage they are seeking with primary, transitional, mother-tongue education (meaning a bilingual education program which introduces literacy and primary subjects through the medium of the mother tongue, then gradually transitions to monolingual Nepali instruction as students' command of Nepali allows).

Since 1990 many minority-language groups have organized their own non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These NGOs are petitioning the government for assistance in establishing transitional mother-tongue education programs in their languages. These NGOs are also attempting to revitalize their cultures by promoting in their communities their own indigenous language, culture, and religion. Ethnic groups such as Magar, Gurung, Chepang, Sherpa, Tharu, Rai, Limbu and others have all formed such groups. Of these, the Magar, Gurung, and Limbu are represented in this research.

The myth of national bilingualism

There is a common misconception in Nepal—throughout all of South Asia in my experience—that "virtually everyone speaks the national language." To be Nepalese is to speak the Nepali language. This myth of bilingualism is partly semantic in nature, ignoring the issue of bilingual proficiency, and obscuring the fact that not everyone who speaks a second language does so as fluently as a mother-tongue speaker.

As used in this paper bilingualism is the ability to speak two (or more) languages, without reference to the degree of fluency in the second language. Most Nepalese citizens have been exposed to Nepali and have at least some passive ability in the language, some bilingual ability. But being able to correctly respond to the question, "Where are you from?" is entirely different from being able to discuss religion, philosophy, or highly emotional issues. To call both abilities "bilingual" is a gross oversimplification which obscures reality. Only those whose Nepali ability (i.e., bilingual proficiency) allows them to control deeply felt and abstract material are linguistically able to be full participants in the nation-state.

Research questions

A fundamental question which Nepal's aspiring ethnic groups need to address is this: do they have a legitimate functional need for mother-tongue education? Any group can claim need based on ethnic identity and the desire for cultural promotion. Functional need, however, refers to the inability, on the part of a significant portion of the language group, to

adequately control oral and written Nepali. The main question underlying any discussion of a group's need for mother-tongue education is the primary question of this study: how proficient in the Nepali language are the Tibeto-Burman ethnolinguistic groups of Nepal?

Definitively answering the question of "how proficient" would require detailed proficiency testing of millions of people—an impossible feat! The assessment of demographic factors, however, is something routinely accomplished in censuses. The detailed correlation of demographic factors and proficiency test results has the potential to provide a tool which will give us broad insights into community-wide Nepali proficiency. This research seeks to provide the basis for such a tool by testing a broad sample of subjects from seven different ethno-linguistic groups and comparing their Nepali proficiency with demographic factors. The driving question is this: can we gain an adequate understanding of Nepali proficiency by just looking at relevant demographic factors?

Choice of test instrument

Answering these research questions requires a test instrument appropriate for testing large samples of people in the field, including uneducated and illiterate people.

The test instrument must be quick to administer and easy for subjects to understand what is required of them; it must be easily adaptable for use in multiple language groups; it should not require administrators to know the subject's mother tongue; and it should discriminate a wide range of second-language proficiencies. Only the sentence repetition test (SRT) as developed by Radloff (1991) meets all of these criteria and is therefore suitable for this kind of testing.

Though an SRT is quite time consuming and difficult to develop, once developed it can be administered in less than five minutes per subject. Radloff's contribution to bilingualism studies has now made it feasible to evaluate large samples in a very short time and to address questions that are the focus of this study.

Nepali variation and standardization

Nepali, spoken as it is over a large, mountainous area where illiteracy predominates, has a number of different dialects. Largely due to the widespread increase in education and communication in Nepal since 1950, the speech of the educated Brahmins and Chetris of Kathmandu is becoming the standard variety of Nepali (Matthews 1992:ii). The publication of the Gorkha patra, previously a weekly and now a daily newspaper, and standardization efforts of the Royal Nepal Academy, have

also led to a large measure of standardization based on the dialect spoken by educated residents of Kathmandu (Verma 1992:77).

The varieties of Nepali, however, are still very much in a state of flux. Michael Hutt (1988:51-52) documents the development of a standard form of Nepali, but also cites the growing divergence between the standard spoken variety and the variety used in literature:

Due to the often formal contexts of usage of written Nepali, however, a 'high' variety has evolved which is becoming increasingly distant from its spoken counterpart. In fact, there could be said to be three forms of standard Nepali: the spoken norm, based on an ideal version of the Valley dialect, the ordinary written language of everyday literature and the formal 'high' variety of scholars and administrators. Trends of change in the latter two varieties are proceeding in almost exactly opposite directions: in popular literature, colloquialism is becoming more highly prized, in scholarly works more and more words are being borrowed from Sanskrit or English. . . . Scholarly written Nepali and its high-grade spoken counterpart have diverged from the colloquial speech of Kathmandu to the extent that the situation has become almost diglossic.

Matthews (1992:ii), with a more hopeful view of standardization, summarizes this issue which is of great consequence for this study of second-language proficiency in Nepal:

[There is a] fairly big difference which exists between the spoken and written language. The latter, which is employed in most printed works, newspapers and broadcasts of Radio Nepal, is characterised by the large number of words taken over from Sanskrit, a more or less consistent use of grammatical gender and certain verbal forms which feature only sporadically in everyday speech. Although in the first half of this century, the literary language would have been regarded as artificial, and understood only by the educated elite, an increase in literacy and the growing use of the transistor and in some areas the television have radically altered the situation. The effect of the written style on speech has given rise to a certain inconsistency, and it is no longer uncommon to hear both literary and colloquial forms of the same word in the space of a few sentences.

I would agree that recent changes have "radically altered the situation" regarding the spread of what I refer to here as "Educated Nepali"; however, as I show, the majority of the population of Nepal still do not control Educated Nepali speech near as well as do educated mother-tongue speakers of Nepali in Kathmandu.

Diglossia

The concept of diglossia should be mentioned here because one distinctive of diglossia is that it refers to a significant difference between written and spoken varieties. The important question for this study is not whether or not Nepali is a case of diglossia, but in what ways does Nepali have some of the characteristics of diglossia.

The term diglossia was first used by Charles Ferguson in 1959 to describe a language situation in which two varieties of the same language exist side by side and are used for different functions (1959:328). A more prestigious, standardized, and formal variety is termed the High dialect (H); its informally learned and used counterpart is the Low dialect (L). Fishman revised and extended the concept in 1967 to include unrelated languages as well as dialects of the same language (Fishman 1967:74). Ferguson explained diglossia with reference to nine categories: function, prestige, literary heritage, acquisition, standardization, stability, grammar, lexicon, and phonology. The varieties of Nepali fit his concept in many ways, though not entirely. Ferguson's nine categories are summarized in Table 1 (following Britto 1986:8-9), with reference to how well Nepali fits into this model. Written Nepali is here labeled the H variety; colloquial Nepali is labeled L.

Though Nepali satisfies many of the features of Ferguson's diglossia, and likewise for Fishman's revision of the term which explicitly includes stylistic variations of the same language, it is still unclear whether or not it satisfies a fundamental requirement of either Ferguson's or Fishman's definition of diglossia, i.e., that no segment of the speech community uses H in normal conversation. I think that this requirement does hold true for spoken Nepali: educated Brahmins (upon whose speech Educated Nepali is based) speak a variety of Nepali substantially different from what has become the standard written form. Control test results in Table 5 give credence to this conclusion. Uneducated mother-tongue speakers of Nepali do not score as highly on the Nepali SRT as do those who are educated.

Table 1: Ferguson's diglossia, with rereference to Nepali

Category	Characteristic of H:	Characteristic of L:	Nepali situation
Function	Used in formal writing, speeches, and such functions	Used in everyday conversations	H used almost exclusively in formal functions
Prestige	More prestigious	Less prestigious	H has more prestige
Acquisition	Formally, in school	Informally	With few exceptions, H is learned in school
Standardi- zation	Highly standardized	Poorly standardized	H is rapidly being standardized; L is not
Literary heritage	Large, esteemed literature	Small, less highly esteemed literature	H has fairly small, but esteemed, literature
Stability	Autonomous and stable with some interference from L	Autonomous and stable with some interference from H	H is growing more stable as it gets more standardized. H and L are more autonomous as education spreads
Lexicon	Mostly shared with L except for technical words; some paired with L	Mostly shared with H, but with some paired with H	Basic lexicon is the same, but with large technical vocabulary lacking in L. Absence of paired items
Phonology	A shared phonological system with L	A shared phonological system with H	Shared system
Grammar	More complex	Simpler	H is more complex: e.g. H has several register levels and full agreement system

Choice of test language for Nepali SRT

The diglossic characteristics of Nepali pose a problem for a study of bilingual proficiency in Nepali, if by definition one must be educated to be well-versed in the test language; uneducated mother-tongue speakers of Nepali will not necessarily be as proficient as those who are educated.

It is in this context that this study was conducted, and the choice of the best variety of Nepali to use for proficiency testing needed to be made. For the results of this study to have application to non-formal education and language policy and planning, the test language must be the one which predominates in the media and education of Nepal. What I call Educated Nepali is the only logical choice.

Research scope: Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal

Second language (L2) proficiency is of two types: inherent and learned (Grimes 1987:7). Inherent ability to understand a related speech variety is relatively uniform throughout a speech community because the nature of the relationship between the two speech varieties is essentially constant if various contact variables are controlled (Milroy 1987:21). Learned ability varies widely among individuals and subsegments of a community according to the nature and degree of their contact with the second language. This contact varies on an individual basis, and is closely related to demographic factors like education, sex, age, and degree of travel.

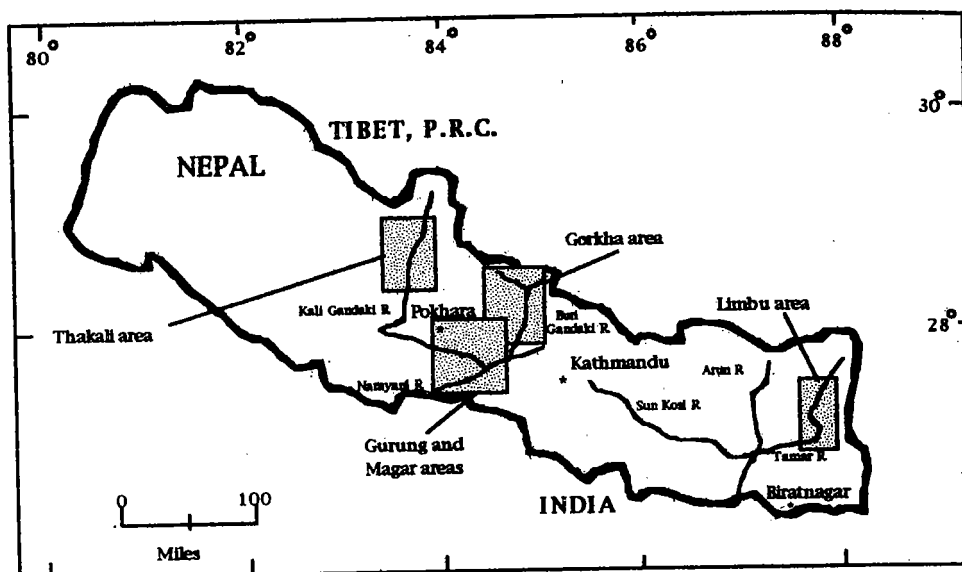
The type of language proficiency studied in this research is learned as opposed to inherent ability. All of the test subjects in this research speak as their first language (L1, or mother tongue) a language in the Tibeto-Burman language family. Nepali, the second language in question here, is an Indo-Aryan language. One would not expect any inherent understanding between speakers of the two language families, nor would one expect one of these languages to be linguistically closer to Nepali than any of the other languages.

The results of this research should be applicable to other Tibeto-Burman languages throughout Nepal. Where the first language is not Tibeto-Burman, however, care must be exercised in applying these results. Languages more closely related to Nepali, or communities with a significantly different set of language-contact factors, will likely have significantly different profiles of Nepali proficiency (Webster 1993a:40-45). However, the principles of this study should be widely applicable to most multilingual situations.

Research areas

Seven ethnolinguistic groups in five research areas were visited for this research. The first four areas are in central Nepal, and the fifth area is in eastern Nepal (see Map 1). These research areas are intended to provide a sample of the Tibeto-Burman groups in Nepal which are representative in terms of their isolation, population, and degree of interethnic contact.

Map 1: Nepal showing of research areas



Summary of research areas

This section summarizes the test points in the five research areas in a quantifiable way to facilitate cross-village comparison. In studying interethnic contact in Burkina Faso, Showalter (1991:102) marks specific characteristics which are concrete indicators of relative village isolation and likelihood of interethnic contact. I assume isolation to be inversely related to opportunities for contact with Nepali speakers. I have followed his model here (though the indicators of isolation and opportunity to use Nepali are much different) to arrive at a "L2 exposure" factor for each village.

Table 2 presents the criteria used in assigning point values to the seven attributes of village isolation. The higher the L2 exposure factor, the less isolated and the more opportunities to use Nepali. Table 3 summarizes the key attributes of each research area and quantifies these attributes according to their contribution to the L2 exposure factor. Relative isolation as measured by distance from the main road has the greatest weight: Gorkha villages all score a "0" on this factor showing greater isolation, whereas

Magar villages score a "4" or "5." The Gorkha Group, with an average of only 1.3, is substantially different from other areas. The Gurung area, on average, is slightly less isolated than the other research areas, having the highest average score. Because of small samples in each Gurung village they are combined here.

Table 2: Criteria for quantifying relative opportunity for L2 exposure in research areas

Attribute	Point Value	Criteria for assigning point value
Access to roads	0-5	Based on travel time to the nearest road (5=a road to the village; 0=six to seven days' walk to the nearest road.
to airport	0-1	1= airport within one day's walk; 0= more than one day's walk.
to trade route	0-2	Distance to a major trade route where Nepali would be needed: 2= on route; 1= easy access to route; 0=not near route.
Availability of high school	0-2	2= in village; 1= within a day's walk; 0= outside walking distance.
markets	0-2	2= in village; 1= within a day's walk; 0= more than one day's walk.
government services	0-2	2= many services (police, bank, clinic, etc.); 1= minimal services; 0= no services.
Ethnic mix	0-2	2= 20% or more mixed; 1=1-19% mixed; 0= ethnically homogenous.

Table 3: L2 exposure factors for each research site.

Village	Road	Air-port	Trade	School	Ethnic mix	Market	Gov. serv.	Village Total
Pragatinag	5	0	0	2	2	2	2	13
Arkhalā	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Magar (430,000)				Magar average 8.5				
Marpha	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	11

Chhairo	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Chimang	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Thakali (7000)	Thakali average 8.3							
avg village	4	0	0	1.5	2	1.5	1	10
Gurung (228,000)	Gurung average 10.0							
Lho	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bihi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Phidim	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	4
Gorkha (15,000)	Gorkha average 1.3							
Gurung (228,000)	Gurung average 10.0							
Hangdewa	4	1	2	1	2	1	0	11
Okre	4	0	0	2	2	1	0	9
Worden	4	0	0	1	2	1	0	8
Limbu (250,000)	Limbu average 9.3							

METHODOLOGY

The sentence repetition test

The sentence repetition test (SRT) used in this study was developed according to the test development methodology presented by Radloff (1991, Chapter 3). An SRT consists of a set of carefully selected and tape-recorded sentences. Subjects listen to each sentence one by one, on headphones, and are evaluated according to a four-point scale (0-3) on their ability to accurately repeat each sentence. Essentially any deviation from the recorded sentences is counted as an error. The sentences are not related in meaning, but gradually increase in length and complexity. In general, and this is true for the Nepali SRT, there are 18 sentences—three practice sentences followed by 15 which count toward the subject's score. The test administrator allows replays of the practice sentences as many times as is necessary to ensure that each subject understands the methodology before proceeding past the practice sentences.

The SRT is an indirect, correlated test. Scores on an SRT have validity by virtue of being calibrated with an external proficiency standard with some validity. This proficiency standard, the reported proficiency evaluation (RPE), consists of the carefully controlled evaluations of mother-tongue speakers.

SRT results are expressed as a point total out of 45 possible points and correspond to RPE levels. These RPE levels range from 0+ (very minimal proficiency) to 4+ (approaching the proficiency of a native speaker).

Probably at least level-3 proficiency is required to adequately understand most philosophical or religious material (Kindell 1991:28). An adult education specialist in Nepal estimates that, because of the higher register language commonly used in written communication, new literates who are not at least RPE level 3 in Nepali have considerable difficulty with Books 3 and 4 of the Nepalese government's Naya Goreto adult literacy program (Glover and Glover 1993:4).

Radloff (1991:8) is careful to emphasize that the SRT is a screening as opposed to a diagnostic test. It provides a general measure of a subject's proficiency rather than a detailed analysis of a subject's strengths and weaknesses. It takes less than five minutes to completely test one subject, including the time for explanation and practice.

Sentence repetition: what does it test?

Sentence repetition, or elicited imitation as it has been called, has been used in language testing since 1963 (Slobin and Welsh 1968). Many early studies were in the fields of childhood language acquisition and language development and disorders. Subsequent applications of the methodology were in studies of second language acquisition, nonstandard dialects, acculturation, and deviant speech (see Gallimore and Tharp 1981, for review of the literature).

What exactly does sentence repetition test? This question has been debated by many researchers—Oller (1979) provides a good summary of this. Those in favor of the technique argue that as long as mimicry material is beyond the grasp of short-term memory it is a valid test of both comprehension and production. Grimes (1992b:58) is specific in her critique of the SRT, arguing that it is "incapable of evaluating lexical discrimination, discourse comprehension, productive use, and situational appropriateness, at the least." Much of the criticism of sentence repetition as a measure of language competence centers on its weakness as a diagnostic measure of specific language capabilities. None of the researchers who question the methodology on these grounds, says Radloff (1991:78), deny that sentence repetition tests assess the general ability to control the grammar, vocabulary, and phonology of a language.

Hamayan et al. (1978) showed that a repetition task does indeed test more than comprehension and production. They concluded (1978:331):

The validity of the [repetition] technique rests on the assumption that the child, or the second-language learner, when presented with a sentence longer than his immediate memory span, will pass it through a type of filter—his interim

grammar—before repeating it. If a specific syntactic feature is not part of an individual's grammar, that element will be distorted during production.

Test-retest reliability

One measure of the reliability of the SRT is the replicability of test results. A sample of twenty-four Gurung subjects was tested two times, eighteen months apart.³ Average scores on the pre- and post-tests were identical, as shown in Table 4.

This retest shows not only that the same subjects when tested a second time will score similarly, but that the same test administered by different researchers will produce reliable results.

Table 4: Replicability of the SRT: an 18-month retest.

	SRT 1	SRT 2
SRT average score (N=24)	28.0	28.0

SRT development

A detailed test development methodology is found in Radloff (1991) and is only briefly discussed here. The most important part of test development is the calibration of the SRT with the reported proficiency evaluation (RPE). In the RPE subjects who have taken a preliminary version of the SRT are also evaluated by close acquaintances who themselves are educated mother-tongue speakers of the test language. In the development of the Nepali SRT approximately 60 second-language speakers of Nepali, from a variety of mother tongues, took a preliminary form of the Nepali SRT, and were also evaluated on the RPE. Procedures require that the RPE evaluators be close enough acquaintances with subjects to have spoken together in the test language over a period of time and on a wide range of topics. The Nepali evaluators were carefully guided as they ranked, and then rated, three to five L2 friends in each of several areas: vocabulary, fluency, accent, comprehension, and grammar. Each area of proficiency is weighted, producing a point total for each subject that is then calibrated with the raw score from the SRT.

Language proficiency criteria used in the RPE evaluation are the original Foreign Service Institute skill area descriptions that formed the basis for early versions of FSI oral proficiency tests. Radloff (1991:130) explains that the advantages to using the RPE technique are that proficiency

evaluations come from the test language community, are based on that community's norms, and rely on the strength of extended personal relationships with that community.

The preliminary form of the SRT had 40-60 sentences. These were reduced to the final form of 15, plus three practice sentences, by choosing those sentences which discriminated subjects' proficiency the best (as measured by the RPE), and which represented a wide range of difficulty.

Control testing

One measure of the validity of the SRT is the control test conducted with mother-tongue speakers of the test language. The control test should demonstrate that mother-tongue subjects perform at the highest levels of proficiency; the RPE levels, after all, are defined in relation to native-speaker proficiency. It should also demonstrate that there is not a significant difference among old and young, educated and uneducated, male and female: all mother-tongue speakers should have comparable proficiency in their first language.

These criteria are very difficult to apply in the case of Nepali because of the diglossic nature of the language. By definition, those who are educated in Nepali are those who control Educated Nepali; those who are uneducated do not control it as well. Age and sex distinctions within an educational category, however, should show little difference in SRT scores on the control test. The degree to which SRT scores are different between educated and uneducated groups is one measure of the degree to which Educated Nepali is different from colloquial Nepali. Table 5 presents the control test results of 54 mother-tongue speakers.

These data show that educated mother-tongue Nepali women performed significantly better ($p=.008$) than uneducated women. Average scores for women spanned the entire range for RPE level 3+, i.e., though average scores show a significant difference based on education, they are both within the range of RPE 3+. Data for men are insufficient to determine if education has a significant effect.

All subcategories for the control test averaged RPE 3+, suggesting that the Nepali SRT does not discriminate above level 3+. Put another way it means that for the sake of interpreting SRT results, subjects scoring thirty-four or above on the SRT are indistinguishable from mother-tongue speakers of Nepali.

Table 5: Nepali SRT control test results, showing average score, equivalent RPE level, and sample size.

	Male	Female	Totals
Educated	37.8	39.5	38.5
Uneducated		33.9	33.9
		3+	3+
		22	22
Totals	37.8	35.9	36.6
	3+	3+	3+
	19	35	54

SRT and RPE calibration

As developed by Varenkamp (1994), the Nepali SRT shows a strong positive correlation ($r=0.83$) with the RPE. The linear relationship between the two variables is quite marked for subjects up to RPE level 3+; the linear relationship for subjects above RPE level 3+ is less clear.

Table 6 presents the calibration scale for converting SRT raw scores to RPE levels, and gives a brief summary description of proficiency levels (Varenkamp 1993), Radloff 1991:242).

Table 6: Nepali SRT raw scores and equivalent RPE levels

SRT raw score range	Equivalent RPE level	Summary description of proficiency level
0-4	0+	Very minimal proficiency
5-8	1	Minimal, limited proficiency
9-14	1+	Limited, basic proficiency
15-20	2	Adequate, basic proficiency
21-27	2+	Good, basic proficiency
28-33	3	Good, general proficiency
34-45	3+ & above	Very good, general proficiency to excellent proficiency

RESULTS

Overview of results

Test sample: The demographic profile of the test sample, given in Table 7, describes the 552 subjects tested from whom complete demographic information was elicited.

Table 7.: Demographic profile of overall test sample, showing number and percentage of sample in each sub-category (N=552).

Sex	Age Group	Education Level			Total
		Uneducated 0 Years	Primary 1-5 years	Higher 6+ years	
	Youth (15-30)	40 (7%)	32 (6%)	68 (12%)	140 (25%)
Male	Middle (31-45)	49 (9%)	18 (3%)	17 (3%)	84 (15%)
	Older (46+)	71 (13%)	3 (1%)	12 (2%)	86 (16%)
Male Total		160 (29%)	53 (10%)	97 (17%)	310 (56%)
	Youth (15-30)	69 (13)	20 (4)	34 (6)	123 (22)
Female	Middle (31-45)	69 (13%)	4 (1%)	1 (0%)	74 (14%)
	Older (46+)	44 (8%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	45 (8%)
Female Total		182 (34%)	25 (5%)	35 (6%)	242 (45%)
Overall Sample Total		342 (63%)	78 (15%)	132 (23%)	552 (100%)

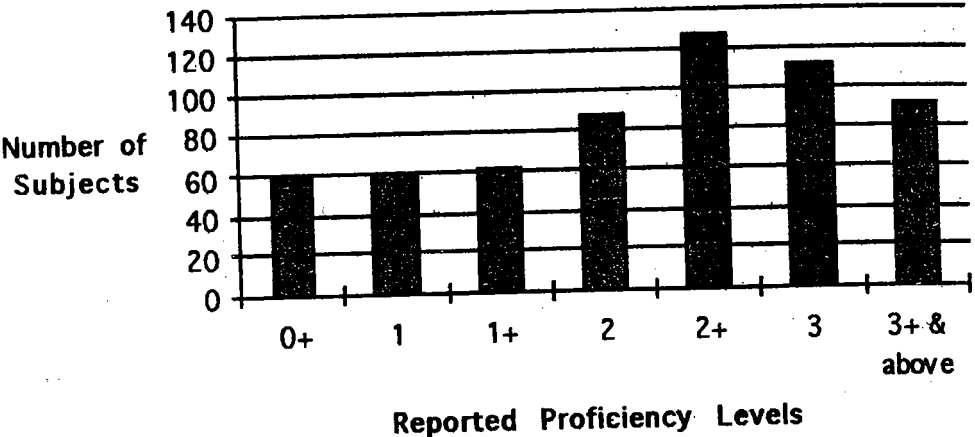
That 56% of the sample is male suggests some bias in the sample: men are slightly overrepresented in my sample. Census data from Thakali, Magar, and Limbu areas show two other main areas in which the test sample is biased. Educated men are overrepresented, and uneducated women are underrepresented. This discussion of results focuses on a factor by factor analysis to investigate if the effects of the same factor in different areas are the same or different. For this reason the overall sample in each test area may over- or underrepresent some part of the population as the purpose was not to get the most accurate average but to test enough people

in each sub-category to give a clear picture of proficiency in that sub-category.

Overall totals

A total of 558 subjects were tested on the Nepali SRT. Figure 1 gives the profile of proficiency levels for the total sample, showing decreasing numbers of people at the higher levels of proficiency. Forty-eight percent of subjects scored at RPE levels 2 and below, corresponding with proficiency levels inadequate to satisfy more than basic, routine requirements; only sixteen percent scored at level 3+ and above, comparable to mother-tongue proficiency.

Figure 1: Profile of RPE proficiency levels for entire sample.



Description of low and high proficiency subjects

Looking in more detail at that part of the population with the lowest ability in Nepali, and that part with the best ability, highlights the great discrepancy between these two groups. Table 8 contrasts the SRT results of 273 subjects in five speech communities. Travel is defined here as having lived more than 6 months outside the mother-tongue area.

Table 8: Comparison of most and least proficient segments of five speech communities (n=273).

Category	Rpe Levels	
	Below Level 2 N = 181	Levels 3+ & above N = 92
Average Age	36 Yerars	26 Years
Sex	56% Female	35% Female
Education	93% Uneducated	12% Uneducated
Travel	86% Untraveled	44% Untraveled

Table 8 shows that those least proficient in Nepali are generally female, older, uneducated, and untraveled. Those who are comparable to the proficiency of mother-tongue Nepali speakers are generally male, younger, educated, and traveled.

Analysis of factors

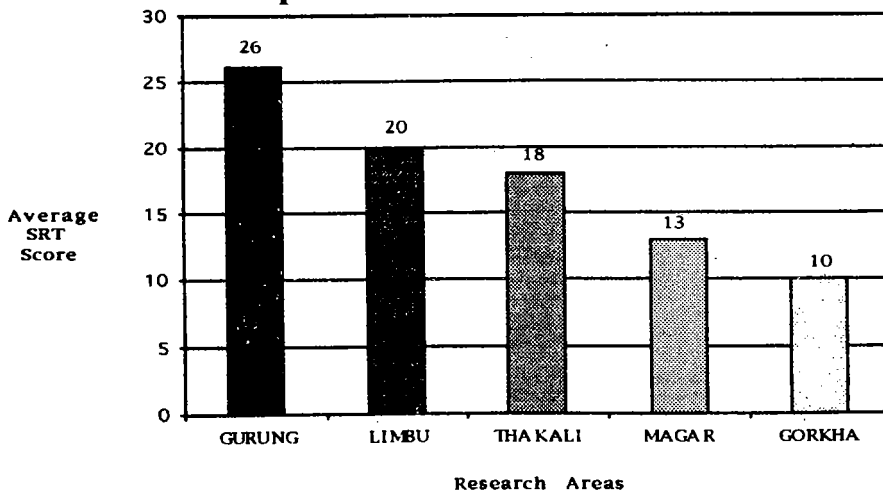
The selection of factors which may have a significant relationship to Nepali proficiency has been motivated by two things: 1) ease of measuring the factor in future field studies, and 2) the need to account for as much variation as possible in average proficiency scores. Some factors, though not causally related to Nepali proficiency, are easily identified and quantified on a large community scale and are related in some indirect way to L2 proficiency. They are indicators of second-language proficiency.

The first two factors examined here are factors which may have an indirect effect on L2 proficiency. "Research areas" and "village" are analyzed because of the observation that similar demographic subgroups in different areas are significantly different in average SRT score. Since all groups speak Tibeto-Burman languages and are thus linguistically approximately equidistant from the test language Nepali, language should have little effect on the factors of research area and village. First I discuss the variation in average score observed in the different test sites, then I propose a factor to account for some of this variation.

Research area

Proficiency varied widely among the five research areas. Comparing samples of uneducated subjects shows the difference most clearly. Figure 2 shows that average SRT score for uneducated subjects varies from a high of 26 in the Gurung area to a low of 10 in the Gorkha area ($\chi^2=150.9$, $p<.0001$).

Figure 2: Average SRT score for uneducated samples in five research areas.



Village

In Table 9 villages are listed by rank order of average score to show the relative strength of a village's effect on subjects' Nepali proficiency.

Table 9: SRT average by village (listed in rank order), for uneducated subjects ($\chi^2=167.5$, $p<.0001$).

Village	Survey (mother tongue)	SRT average for uneducated subjects
Gurung Village	Gurung	26
Hangdewa	Limbu	24
Worden	Limbu	20
Okre	Limbu	19
Marpha	Thakali	19
Chhairo	Thakali	19
Chimang	Thakali	16
Pragatinagar	Magar	16
Philim	Gorkha	12
Arkhala	Magar	11
Lho	Gorkha	10
Bihi	Gorkha	9

Several observations can be made from this rank listing of scores by village. Firstly, villages from the same survey tend to cluster together with little overlap between surveys (e.g., Limbu villages are together towards the top of Table 9, Gorkha villages are together at the bottom). This illustrates, in a different way, what I have already shown in about the significance of research area for Nepali proficiency.

Secondly, there is a wide spread of average scores from village to village. Scores range from a low of nine in Bihi to a high of twenty-six in the Gurung villages. Variation among villages is somewhat more extreme than among research areas, since the latter are simply averages of the villages which comprise them. There is also a significant relationship between research area and average score. It is not surprising, then, that Table 9 shows a similarly significant relationship between village and average score.

Thirdly, even within a particular research area there can be wide variation in average score between villages. Opportunities for speaking Nepali are greater in some villages than in others, depending on access to such things as roads, markets, and ethnic mixing. The two Magar test points, for example, are significantly different ($p<.01$).

L2 exposure factor

Such differences in average Nepali proficiency among similar demographic subgroups in different language groups and different villages demand a principled explanation. Bilingualism is acquired essentially through contact with L2 speakers: the longer and more intensive the contact, the greater the acquisition. I introduce the concept of the "L2 exposure" factor as an attempt to explain variation in Nepali proficiency among apparently homogenous subgroups in different areas.

The L2 exposure factor contains elements pertaining to entire villages, not just to individuals, and I examined it earlier from a predictive perspective. That is, I try to construct a factor which accurately quantifies the degree of L2 exposure that results from the general character of villages, community-wide factors as opposed to individual ones. The correlation of village L2 exposure scores with individual SRT scores gives one measure of how well this factor helps explain variation unexplained by other factors. Correlation coefficients in Table 10 show a moderate correlation which can account for approximately 25% of the actual variation. This factor is investigated more extensively in a later section.

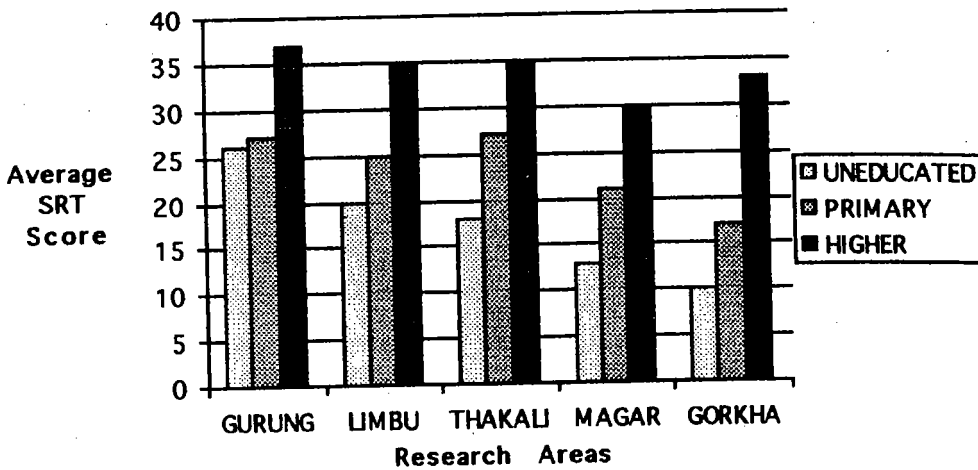
Table 10: Correlation coefficients for L2 exposure factor and individual SRT score.

Sample	Correlation Coefficient
Uneducated	0.49
Total sample	0.48

Education

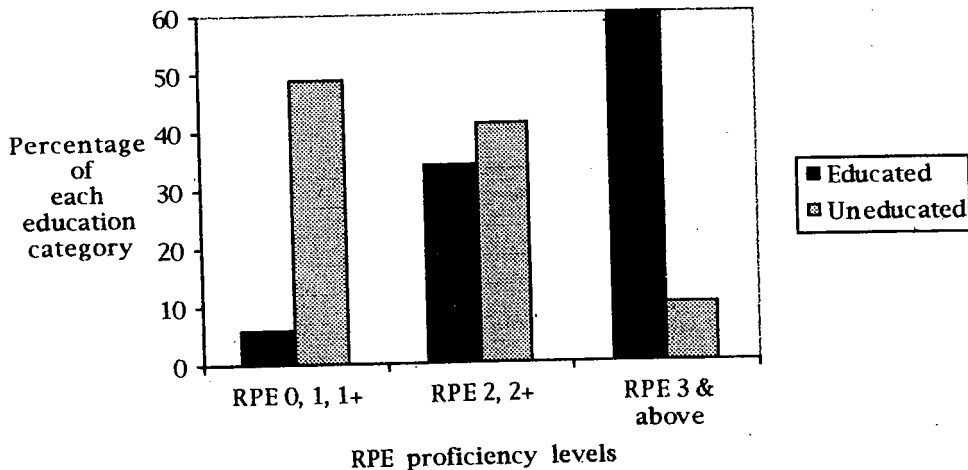
In every community in which I conducted testing, formal public education in Nepali is the factor most highly correlated with acquisition of Nepali, and thus very likely the single most important factor. The more education subjects have, the higher their proficiency in Nepali. Figure 3 summarizes the results by education level for the five speech communities (primary=class 1-5, higher=class 6 and higher).

Figure 3. Graph of average SRT score, by education level, in five speech communities.



Comparing those who have some education with those who are uneducated reveals a striking difference, further demonstrating the importance of education in Nepali acquisition. Figure 4 compares these two groups for the total sample. The majority of those who have some education test at RPE level 3 or higher; the majority of those who are uneducated are equivalent to RPE levels below 2.

Figure 4. Proficiency level by education level in five research areas (educated, N=210; uneducated, N=344).



Another way of measuring the effect of education on acquisition of Nepali is by computing the coefficient of correlation between years of education and SRT score. Correlation coefficients in Table 11 show strong correlations between SRT score and years of education for each research

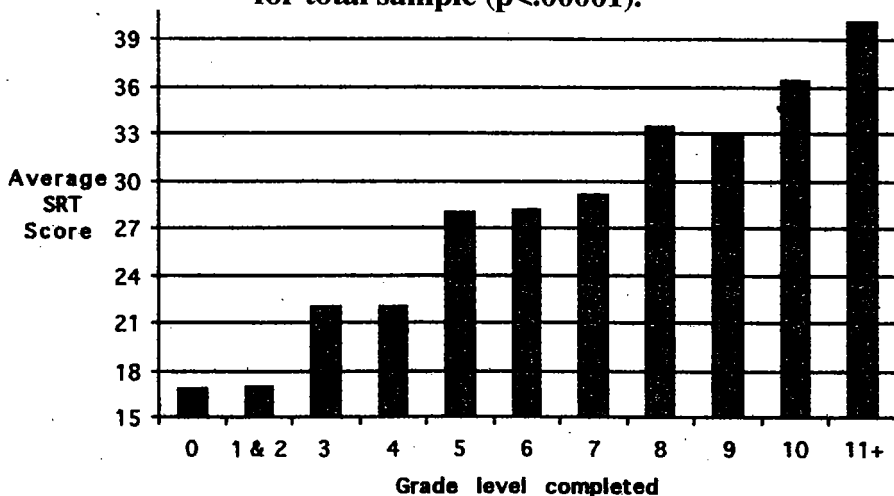
area. The correlation is strongest for Thakali ($r=0.78$) and the least strong for Gorkha ($r=0.62$). All correlations can be described as "high correlation; marked relationship" (Fasold 1984:104).

Table 11: Correlation of years of education and SRT score.

Survey	Magar	Gurung	Gorkha	Thakali	Limbu	Total
Correlation coefficients	0.76	0.67	0.62	0.78	0.72	0.70

If, as I have shown, education has such a strong positive correlation with L2 proficiency, how much education is necessary to elevate subjects to a level similar to that of mother-tongue speakers? Comparing average SRT score by grade level completed in school (Figure 5) reveals that those who have completed grade ten or higher score above 36, equivalent to the highest RPE level; those completing grade eight or nine average 33, equivalent to the upper end of RPE level 3, not significantly different from uneducated mother-tongue Nepali speakers. Those completing only grade seven or less on average do not achieve proficiency levels similar to mother-tongue Nepali speakers.

Figure 5. SRT score by grade level completed, for total sample ($p<.00001$).



NFE among Gurung of Gorkha District

A sample of 24 Gurung were tested twice on the SRT, about 18 months apart. During the 18-month interval, 17 of the subjects had taken a Nepali non-formal education (NFE) course ranging in length from 6-18 months. Results show two things clearly: 1) the process of becoming literate

through an NFE course does not elevate SRT scores; and 2) results of testing the SRT are replicable—testing a sample of subjects for a second time gives virtually identical results to the first time (see Table 12). Averages for both groups remained virtually constant on pre- and post-tests. NFE participants scored slightly better than non-participants on both the pre- and the post-test.

Table12. Eighteen-month longitudinal study.

	SRT1 average (pre-NFE)	SRT2 average (post-NFE)
NFE participant (N=17)	29.0	28.9
No NFE taken (N=7)	25.7	25.9

Looking at a broader sample of all uneducated subjects, I compared SRT results as a function of NFE experience, regardless of whether they took one or both tests (Table 13). Interestingly, the sample of NFE subjects scores significantly better on the SRT than the non-NFE sample. This says that, in the Gurung area, the kind of person who attends an NFE course is above average in Nepali proficiency irrespective of the NFE course.

**Table13. Average SRT score for uneducated sample,
by NFE experience.**

	SRT Average
NFE Experience (N = 33)	27.6
No NFE Experience (N = 28)	22.9

First language

Almost by definition, the most significant determinant of high proficiency is the subject's mother tongue, defined as the language of the childhood home. Not all members of a minority-language group grow up speaking that minority language. Those raised in homes speaking Nepali should be predictably more proficient in Nepali than those who learn it as a second language.

Results from the Gurung area, shown in Table 14, show this to be true: those raised in Nepali-speaking homes are significantly better in Nepali than those raised in Gurung-speaking or mixed homes (ANOVA $p < .01$).

Table 14. Average SRT score by first language for uneducated Gurung subjects.

First Language	Average SRT / Standard deviation / Sample size
Gurung	24.1 / 5.6 / 40
Nepali-Gurung	23.6 / 1.5 / 5
Nepali	31.4 / 6.7 / 8

Uneducated Gurung raised in Nepali-speaking homes performed similarly to uneducated mother-tongue speakers of Nepali who took the control test as one would expect. Counterintuitively, those from homes where they reported speaking “both” languages did not score significantly better than those reporting only Gurung as the language of the home. This indicates that the mixture of language use in the childhood home does not help Nepali proficiency and may actually hinder it. Data from other areas are needed to confirm this hypothesis.

Towards a predictive model of L2 proficiency

Explaining variation in SRT scores

Thus far I have dealt with one independent variable at a time to determine which of the variables have a significant relationship with SRT score. For those factors which are interval variables, simple regression analysis shows the degree to which an increase or decrease in the independent variable leads to a corresponding change in the dependent variable, the SRT score. Among the variables examined so far, education is by far the most significant factor correlating with SRT. The number of years of education correlates with SRT score at $r=0.70$ ($r^2=0.49$). Thus education accounts for nearly 50% of the variation in SRT score.

In seeking to explain L2 proficiency, or better yet, in predicting it, one must try to account for as much as possible of the total variation in SRT scores. The problem of explaining variation is as follows:

$$\text{total variation in L2 proficiency} = \text{variation explained by education} \\ + \text{unexplained variation.}$$

Unfortunately, the unexplained variation is 50%, a large amount. In the remainder of this section I attempt to construct a model which will account for this unexplained variation.

Multiple regression analysis, though a statistical tool for interval data, can provide a rough idea of the relative strength of ordinal and nominal variables as well. Multiple regression of education, the L2 exposure factor,

age, sex, and travel reveals that only the first two variables are significant predictors of SRT score. The L2 exposure variable, discussed earlier is both a summary of community-wide variables and a first attempt to quantify variables which affect entire communities of people. Using this version of the L2 exposure factor, and education, the equation for predicting SRT scores is:

$$\text{predicted SRT} = 1.5 * \text{education} + .75 * \text{L2 exposure} + 11.5$$

Thus, given no education and an L2 exposure score of zero yields a predicted SRT of 11.5. This value is one measure of the amount of residual, unexplained variation in SRT scores. To put it another way, it is the amount of ambient proficiency that exists on average in the five research areas.

A fairly intuitive way of measuring the efficacy of a model is to count the percentage of predicted cases which are within a defined distance of the measured RPE level, say a half-level or a full RPE level (following Simons 1979:122). This would be formulated as follows:

$$\text{ratio of prediction accuracy} = \frac{\text{predictions within a half level on RPE}}{\text{total predictions}}$$

This ratio multiplied by 100 is the percentage of cases predicted within a half-level. A final measure of prediction accuracy which accounts for how far off predictions are is based on the concept of deviations. Correct predictions are a deviation of zero; predictions off by one half-level on the RPE are a deviation of one; predictions off two half-levels (one full level on the RPE) are a deviation of two; and so on. The formula for the percentage of prediction accuracy is thus:

$$\text{percentage of prediction accuracy} = \frac{\text{total predictions} - \text{total number of deviations}}{\text{total number of predictions}} \times 100$$

With education as the single predictor of RPE level, 82.4% of predicted scores are within a half-level of the measured scores, 95.9% are within one full level. When this L2 exposure factor is added to the equation, the percentage of predicted cases within a half-level barely rises, to 82.5% (see Table 22).

Improving the model

The initial L2 exposure factor is based on my perception of factors that would contribute to L2 exposure and thus to increased proficiency. To determine which of the single components of this L2 exposure factor correlate significantly with SRT score I did simple regression of each variable with the mean of each village's uneducated sample. To do this I first redefined the individual components of the L2 exposure factor so that they were all interval variables. Table 15 presents the values used for each village and the resulting correlation coefficient with the mean for uneducated samples. The three highest correlation coefficients are underlined. (All components except for ethnic mix and government services are measured in days of travel, with ten hours equal to a full day of travel; ethnic mix is percentage of mixing with other language groups; government services is number of government entities).

These correlation coefficients are quite intuitive: the first six factors all deal with distance from a key source of L2 exposure, and so a negative correlation means that as distance increases and exposure decreases, the measured effect of that exposure (the SRT score) is less and less; for percentage of ethnic mix, L2 exposure and thus proficiency increases in direct proportion to amount of ethnic mixing (the presence of speakers of other languages increases the opportunity for using Nepali).

Table 15. Components of L2 exposure factor, with correlation coefficient of each factor with SRT.

Village	Uned Mean	Rd	Air	Trade	High school	Mid school	Mar ket	Ethnic mix	Gov. serv.
Pragatinagar	16	0.1	1.0	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	30	5
Arkhalā	11	1.0	1.8	2.0	1.0	0.1	1.0	5	1
Marpha	19	4.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	20	3
Chhairo	19	4.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	10	2
Chimang	16	4.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	10	2
Gurung	26	0.7	1.2	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	30	3
Lho	10	5.5	5.5	1.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	1	1
Bhi	9	5.0	5.0	1.0	2.8	2.0	2.5	1	1
Philim	12	4.5	4.0	0.1	2.0	0.1	2.0	5	5
Hangdewa	24	1.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	20	3
Okre	19	0.7	1.0	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.2	20	4
Worder	20	1.0	2.0	1.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	20	2
Correlation Coefficient		-.57	-.72	-.34	-.80	-.61	-.79	-.81	.31

Only three components of the L2 exposure factor are greater than 0.75, the arbitrary level I chose. Adding these factors into the model one at a time shows the degree to which they improve upon the simple model that has only education as predictor. Table 16 summarizes the percentage of explained variation in the model as additional factors are added to the model.

Among the five versions of the model there is little difference in the percentage of cases predicted within a half-level RPE, all of the models being close to 85% accurate. All of the models are better than 95% accurate in predicting proficiency to within one RPE level. The right column of Table 16, showing the percentage of prediction accuracy, shows model three to be the best overall model.

Table 16. Predictive ability of different models

Components in model	Percentage of cases in which predicted RPE is			Percentage of prediction accuracy
	Exactly predicted	within one half-level	within two half-levels	
1. education	28.4%	32.4%	95.9%	6%
2. education + 12 exposure factor	36.9%	82.5%	96.4%	16%
3. education + ethnic mix	44.2%	84.2%	97.5%	25%
4. education + ethnic mix + high school distance	40.8%	85.1%	97.3%	23%
5. education + ethnic mix + high school distance + market distance	40.8%	85.1%	97.3%	23%

The most predictive model of L2 proficiency includes just two factors: years of education and percentage of ethnic mix. The equation for this model is as follows:

$$\text{Predicted score on Nepali SRT} = 1.7 * \text{Years of education} + 0.35 * \text{Percentage ethnic mix} + 10.9$$

For subjects with no education living in a perfectly homogenous speech community, this model would predict an SRT score of 10.9. Each year of education increases SRT score by 1.7 points, and each one percent increase

in a community's ethnic heterogeneity increases a person's SRT score by about one-third point.

Theoretically, predicted scores greater than 45 are possible when the ethnic mixture of a community is high enough. Such scores are not actually possible, but what this means practically is that those living in such villages are forced by circumstance to speak Nepali in virtually all domains outside the home, which in most cases will produce proficiency comparable to that of mother-tongue speakers.

I do not think there is anything particularly special about ethnic mixture being the best component of L2 exposure to include in the model as opposed to other components. Different measures of geographic isolation (distance from nearest road, school, or airstrip) will generally correlate quite highly with each other and with the degree of ethnic homogeneity of a village (the more isolated, the more homogenous). Choosing one variable over any other would not have made a substantial difference in the predictive ability of the resulting equation, partly because each adds only a small improvement to the single-factor model.

Summary and conclusions

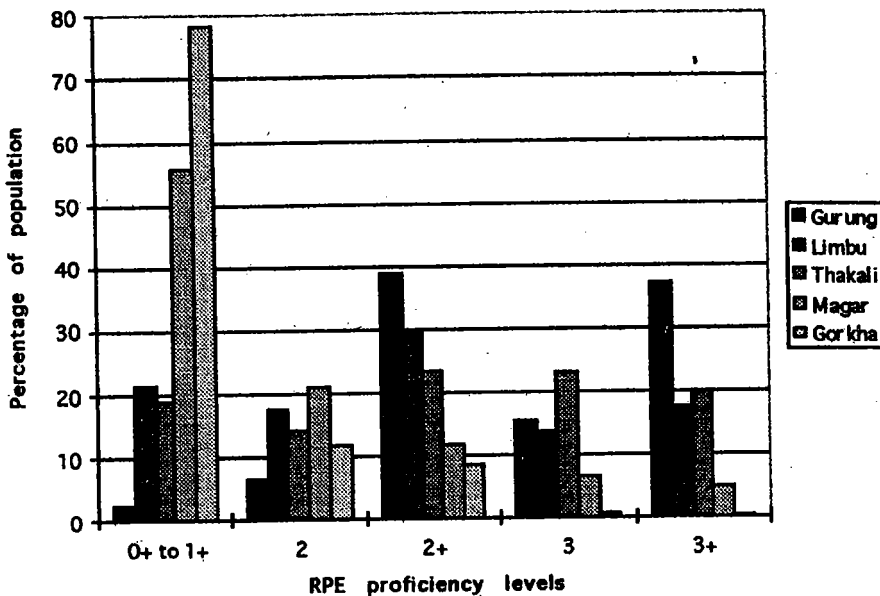
Summary of results

How proficient in Nepali are the different Tibeto-Burman groups in Nepal? This is the primary question of this study and the one on which language planning issues hinge. To answer this question and others, this study tested a sample of 558 subjects on the Nepali sentence repetition test. These subjects are from seven different ethnolinguistic groups, living in five main areas in the hills of Nepal.

Overview of Nepali proficiency

The proficiency profile below projects the results of this study to the wider population in each area. These projections are based on census data and demographic profiles constructed for each area. They correct for known over- or underrepresentation of subgroups within the samples. This profile, then, is the best prediction of what the overall profile would look like if all the members of each community were tested.

As can be seen by brief inspection of this proficiency profile, there is substantial variation among the five main communities. Gurung in Gorkha District are the most proficient of the five areas, followed by the samples from the Limbu, Thakali, Magar, and Gorkha areas.

Figure 6: Profile of proficiency for all research areas.

Interpretation of results

The interpretation of these results, and their application to practical language planning issues, depends largely on one's goals and criteria. A population who is RPE level 3+ in Nepali is, at least on the basis of this methodology, indistinguishable from mother-tongue speakers of Nepali. One can argue that because of the diglossic nature of Nepali and the fact that most literature in Nepali has been and continues to be written in "high" Nepali, a population needs to be RPE level 3+ to adequately understand written Nepali. Practical experience from adult non-formal education classes suggests that RPE level 3 is the standard that needs to be reached for successful completion of Books 3 and 4 of the Nepal government's Naya Gareto literacy program. Criteria for other language applications will no doubt require different levels of Nepali proficiency.

I began this paper by defining an ethnic group's "functional need" for mother-tongue education as the "inability, on the part of a significant portion of the language group, to adequately control oral and written Nepali." Given the overall results in this study, as in Figure 6, a strong case can now be made that significant portions of most of the groups in this study do not control Nepali comparably to mother-tongue speakers of Nepali. Perhaps it's time for primary, transitional, mother-tongue education programs to be initiated in Nepal?

Notes

1. This paper is condensed from my M.A. thesis of the same title (Webster 1995), the research for which was carried out under auspices of the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) in 1993.
2. I wish to acknowledge the input of Dr. Clare O'Leary and Bryan Varenkamp concerning this issue.
3. Thanks to Dr. Warren Glover for testing the initial subjects, and to students in the Gorkha NFE program for being willing subjects, twice!

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BOOK REVIEW

Foreign Aid and Foreign Policy: Major Powers and Nepal. 1997. Narayan Khadka. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. pp. xi-423, Index. IRs. 495.

Since the book under review is written by a trained economist whose academic credentials are impeccably superior to most of his counterparts in Nepal, his diagnosis that foreign aid does not mean "generosity and humanitarianism" (p.x) on the part of the donors is purely sterile in stating the obvious. Foreign aid, in other words, is simply a transfer of resources from the resource-rich to resource-poor country. And the underlying motives, whenever such transactions occur between the donor and recipient, are not self-sacrificing but self-seeking for the givers. Exactly, Khadka's analysis of the involvements of the four major powers through foreign aid in Nepal demonstrates the competitive intents inherent in their respective diplomatic pursuits during the Cold War. To dispute the obvious, therefore, is to distort the history of foreign aid in Nepal.

But when an economist of Khadka's repute belabours in becoming a political scientist he misses one elementary aspect of the foreign aid. Though he has linked foreign aid with that of foreign policy pursuits of the concerned powers in Nepal, he has failed to treat foreign aid in itself as being a political issue not only for the donors but also for the recipient states. Otherwise, he would have never suggested "... it was Nepal's internal domestic condition that compelled King Mahendra and King Birendra to pursue the goals and the means of their foreign policy that remained active until the collapse of the panchayat regime" (p.348).

Here, it is interesting to note that Khadka has unraveled a repertoire of information about the interplay of strategic, economic and political motives of the cold warriors in influencing their decisions to bulldoze the other's presence in Nepal. However, he dismisses the motive of the aid receiver as simply not being benign. His analyses of motivations behind the foreign policy objectives of the aid recipient country Nepal, as listed in pages 348-49, were all determined by the domestic compulsions for the survival of monarchy and the Panchayat regime against the burgeoning international

Cold War hostility in the 1960s. How is one to understand this motivation of the Nepali monarchy behind the country's foreign policy objectives as being unfair as Khadka would like one to believe? Similarly, while trying to prove the merits of his argument that the "internal constituents and the external conditions of Nepal were not balanced" the author confuses himself by asserting at one place that the policy of "plying one neighbour off against the other" had paid off (China and India). He suddenly jumped to conclude, in another paragraph, describing the same policy as "brinkmanship" (pp.349-50).

Maybe the political system Nepal had under the review period (1960-90) was thoroughly undemocratic. However, it was a period when foreign aid flourished irrespective of it being interpreted by the post-colonial states as an instrument of neo-colonialism and what not. When decolonialism and the state formation particularly in the Afro-Asian and Latin American continents were in their incipient stages and the Cold War had spread its wings globally, it was of little relevance to the donors' rush in establishing their own influence to be selective. Democracy was not a *priori* for being a recipient of massive foreign aid, but camp following was *priority* set by the contending powers during the Cold War. Hence Nepali monarchy was not that of an obstruction for any donors. Neither the United States nor the erstwhile Soviet Union had treated the monarchy in Nepal as *bete noir*. Nor have India and China seen monarchy as a spent force (even under democracy). The external powers' interests in Nepal was and is stability (crudely defined as insensitive to social change and social justice), irrespective of the prevalent political system, to serve their goals. The reason why Nehru imposed "Delhi compromise" upon the Nepali Congress in February 1951 without taking the party into confidence first, and China remained calm after the Palace coup in December 15, 1960 was not because of their aspersions with party politics but because of their underlying sensitivities in promoting their self-interests.

By outlining the strategic, political, economic and sometimes humanitarian motives behind the foreign aid to Nepal, estimated to have totaled approximately Rs. 45,000 million between 1957 and 1989 (p.351), the four contending powers, namely the United States, India, China and the Soviet Union, had failed to realize their basic objectives in Nepal, as the author accounts. The Americans, whose sole objective during the Cold War years was to eliminate the possibility of Nepal drifting towards the Communist camp, could not prevent the latter from entering into a closer bond of relationship with China. The growing clout of the communists in the post-Jana Andolan Nepal, according to the author, is the evident failure of American foreign aid and foreign policy in Nepal. Likewise, the Soviet

Union's interests in countervailing the US and, particularly, the Chinese position in Nepal were merely transformed to become an appendage to Indian interests in the 1970s, which lost its sway in Nepal after Moscow's Afghan gambit. Besides a brief interlude of Cultural Revolution, Chinese position in Nepal was never ideologically articulated. Chinese concern was definitely broader than preventing pro-Tibetan movement in Nepal. Perhaps it could have been one of the reasons for the Chinese to keep the Nepali communists in good humour and its competitive urge to balance the overwhelming Indian influence was another. India, frequently projected as a hegemon on the political horizon of Nepal, on the other hand, has also failed to contain increasing communist influence, the author says. Despite occasional ruptures in persuasion of its strategic objectives India has however succeeded in continuing a "special relationship" with Nepal which none of the other powers enjoys.

Besides India's and China's, the foreign aid and foreign policy pursuits of the superpowers were never country specific to Nepal. Actually, the United States has never felt it necessary to establish an independent South Asia Desk at the Foggy Bottom till 1992. The Soviet Union was reacting first to the American then Chinese presence in Nepal. The confusion it created out of supporting and then withdrawing from its commitment to "zone of peace" proposal of Nepal was self-evident of Moscow's policy drift. The superpowers reactivated their involvement in Nepal only during post-Afghanistan phase in South Asia and receded until the dawn of democracy in Nepal. Though the direct US foreign aid to Nepal revolves between \$17 and \$25 million per annum, the Americans have been aiding the democratization processes in the country through various means.

Even in the post-Cold War era there is no sign of drying up of foreign aid as many feared, though, it no longer remains a free-lunch. The foreign aid component now is more loans than grants. Prior to 1990, the loan component was under \$1 billion which increased to near about \$3 billion by 1997. But as Khadka maintains, there is no "moral obligations" either for the US or any other states to continue to aid democratic Nepal duly because they had previously aided the autocratic one. The continuation of foreign aid in Nepal has its own logic and dynamics; donors' presence either in bilateral or multilateral forms is intricately tied with poverty agenda which is on the rise than decline despite their decades of efforts towards poverty alleviation in Nepal.

Turing to the more specific determinants of Nepal's foreign policy objectives in the context of attracting foreign aid, one is intrigued by the author's attempt in providing the monumental details on Nepali history since the sixth century AD (Chapter II, pp.52-108), even though the history

of the Nepali state formation is of much recent origin. And the foreign aid, as the term is understandably used, is only a post-World War II creation. The author could have done more justice to the study had he ever thought about the use of foreign policy by a resource poor underdeveloped state than wasting several precious pages on the chequered history of Nepal. The author also appears to be carried away by the big "IF" while delving on the Nepali history. "Had Nepal won the war with the British in 1814-1816 Nepal surely would have emerged as a Himalayan power by way of annexing all the trans-Himalayan territories" (p.97). Khadka abruptly stop and does not feel it necessary to explain the consequence of such a situation and its relationships with Nepal's foreign policy in response to major powers' foreign aid strategies. Though irrelevant, Khadka must be credited for his fertile thinking, which, however is not the job of a professional economist whose regression tests of hypotheses in presenting findings on motives behind foreign aid are at their best in the book.

As the book is a sequel to Khadka's previous work, *Foreign Aid, Poverty and Stagnation in Nepal* (1991) it merits reading for those interested in Nepal. A careful reading of the book would definitely provide a mine of information to both lay readers or researchers despite its tedious prose and some baffling narratives. Khadka, in any case, deserves appreciation in producing the book through his persistence in learning and for dissemination of knowledge.

-Dhruba Kumar